BING

SPRING 2003

No. 133

THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

Founded in 1950

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BING magazine: http.//members.aol.com/macwilmslo/BING_magazine.html

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Membership renewals fall due on 1st. January each year and new subscription rates effective for 2003 are:

UK	£12 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£13 per annum
USA and Canada	US $20 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$40 per annum
South America / South Africa / Singapore / Japan	£15 per annum

All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in £ sterling payable to 'International Crosby Circle' with the exception of:
(a) U.S. and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F.B.Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars
(c) Mainland European members (not Eire) who should pay Gun Damo in £ sterling.

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer please.

BING is the official journal of the International Crosby Circle and is published in the Spring, Summer and Winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC.

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EDITORIAL

So here we are. One hundred years since Bing's birth. What a century and what a part our man played in it! The whole world changed out of recognition during his lifetime and it's evolving still.

As regards our commemoration of Bing's birth, it's all happening as we go to press! After the wonderful Hofstra conference, the centenary (or 'centennial', depending which side of the Atlantic you call home) celebrations are well and truly underway with all kinds of activities supporting them. The Gonzaga event is the main focus but it's great to see a major celebration also planned for Milwaukee.

In the UK, two new documentaries about Bing have been shown by BBC-TV and full reviews will be found in Bert Bishop's section. In addition, the BBC's Radio2 network is planning three one-hour programmes on Bing's work starting on Tuesday, April 24 and these will be narrated by Pat Boone. In the USA, a TV documentary is being put together for the Public Broadcasting Service by KSPS-TV of Spokane and after a first showing at Gonzaga, it will premiere locally in the Spokane area on the evening of May 18. It will be made available to other PBS stations after that, so hopefully it will start showing up around the USA by late summer.

Many members are doing their bit to obtain publicity. Judy Schmid has done a fantastic job working with Gonzaga University on their event. Ernest Sutkowski has carried on his work with USA radio stations and in addition he has been writing to newspapers and magazines asking them to feature Bing's centennial. Ernest has also continued to support Stan White and Maggie Ryan in their magnificent efforts with radio stations in the UK. Gord Atkinson wrote a nice article about Bing and the centenary for the Ottawa "Forever Young" paper and Paul Barnes will have a sizeable article in the East Anglian Daily Times on May 3. Greg Van Beek in the USA has given several radio interviews, Keith Parkinson was featured on Radio Merseyside, Trevor Wagstaff, Wally Oldfield and Bert Bishop have recorded a special tribute being put out by Radio Essex on May 3, David Lowe will devote all two hours of his programme on Radio Devon on May 3 to Bing, Jim Reilly will be broadcasting a Crosby special on Angel Radio and Arthur Blood and Maurice Beardmore will be promoting Bing on Radio Derby on May 4. The Barbican Library in London is to mount a major display about Bing in June and Trevor Wagstaff and Michael Crampton amongst others will be collecting material for this.

Kathryn Crosby's tome *My Last Years with Bing* and another new book by Richard Grudens have been selling well. A book about the song "White Christmas" has garnered a fair amount of publicity and please see the *Books 'N' Bing* section for reviews of all of these excellent volumes. Lionel Pairpoint's TV chronicle is still being prepared and we have been fortunate in receiving some very useful support for this project from Martin McQuade.

In the USA, MCA/Universal is to issue three

superb new double DVDs and other companies have been active on this front as well. CDs continue to be issued featuring Bing and we have early news of a possible 3-CD set from Michael Feinstein containing very rare material. Also, a long lost "Music That Satisfies" show has been traced as has Bing's recording of "Poor Little G String" for the film *March of Time*.

As we consider Bing's centennial, we must not forget that May 29 will see the 100th. birthday of Bob Hope. Space does not permit us to give him the tribute he deserves but let's all send him our best wishes nearer the time. You can e-mail him through his web site at www.bobhope.com or write to him care of Bob Hope Enterprises, 210 North Pass Avenue, Burbank, CA 91505, USA. Might be nice to send him a card. Mention the ICC if you do.

Apart from Gonzaga on the horizon, we have the merger with Club Crosby. I know that this is broadly welcomed but there will inevitably be some members of both clubs who are anxious about this. It is crucial that we all communicate with each other as matters proceed. Undoubtedly it will take time to get the right international balance in the magazine and I shall need help from you all to achieve this. The first magazine for the combined club will be the Winter 2003 edition.

With a major review of the Hofstra event in this issue, it has been a real challenge to fit everything else in and my apologies to those contributors whose articles have not been used on this occasion. The front cover of this issue has come from Ron Bosley's files and our considerable thanks are due to Jon Oye who has specially prepared the pastel drawing used on our back cover.

As I mentioned last time around, we need all members to make that special effort to tell your local paper / radio station and anyone else in the media about Bing's centenary. Now Is The Hour!

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

It is a special privilege to begin my report by welcoming **Jean Rainey** as a new member of the club. Jean along with Art Allen, Les Gaylor and Dot Hardiman founded the club some 53 years ago. Art joined the ICC recently and Jean comes back into the fold after more than 40 years away, during which time she has been pursuing her chosen career. Like Art, Jean was amazed that the club has survived and prospers and that we produce such a fine professional magazine. Welcome Jean and enjoy catching up with the events of the last forty years!

Events in the later part of 2003 proved most enjoyable for Crosby enthusiasts. 'Hofstra' was a wonderful success and it was a privilege to be in attendance at this celebration of Bing's contribution to popular culture.

As we go to press, we hear that both Vernon Wesley Taylor and George O'Reilly have been "under-the-weather" recently and we send our best wishes to them both for a speedy recovery.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm hand of friendship to 25 new UK members for this issue of BING. **Richard Dent,** an enthusiastic 92 year old Bing devotee, has been an admirer of Bing's work since the early 1930's. Richard was pleasantly surprised and impressed with the professional presentation of both calendar and BING #132. We welcome Richard and the following members and trust that they will derive much pleasure and interest from being members of the ICC.

ENGLAND
Jean Rainey (47 Blythe Hill Lane, London. SE6 4UN, who would like to hear from any members who knew her from the British Bing Club years), Tony Webb (Bath), Pat Barrs (Over Whitacre, Birmingham), Len Scarratt (Wirral, Cheshire), John Beattie (Dartmouth, Devon), Mrs. G West (Luton, Beds.), Frank Burton (Willand, Devon), Gwen Rudman (Cheltenham, Gloucs), John Pritchard (Chester), David Leslie Cole (Romford, Essex), Vic Coleclough (Leighton On Sea), Graham Lovatt (Olney, Bucks.), Barbara G Holmes (Edgware, Middlesex), Mr R Dent (Newbury, Berks.), Mr Cruikshank (Walworth, London), Margaret White (Stockport, Cheshire), Peter Daniels (Wallsend, Tyne & Wear), Billy Butler & Monty Lister (Radio Merseyside), Derek Sanders (Chertsey, Surrey), Cyril Stansfield (Batley, West Yorkshire), Ralph Norton (Chelmsford, Essex), Roy Dixon (Bromsborough, Wirral), Peter Thipthorp (Newport, Isle of Wight)
IRELAND - Thomas Flynn (Dublin).
SCOTLAND - Mark Pyke (Inverness).

DONATIONS

The International Crosby Circle has received some exceptional gifts from the members listed below, and we would like to place on record our gratitude for their generosity in supporting the club. Without the help of the members listed the ICC could not provide the service, which most members have come to value. We are grateful to: -

Gord Atkinson (Canada), Bryce Chinchen (Australia), Hazel Nunn (Australia), Paul Hennessey, Tim Page, Donald Bostock, Brian Lewis, Charles Hall, Rodger Addey, Goronwy Owen, Dave Spong, Tom Maher, Jack Hobday, Harold Hanke, Mr W C Flaherty, Ron Holder, Gerard Hanlon.

Bert Bishop, Doug Haywood, Harry Kirkman, Tony Slaughter, Ronald West, Trevor Wagstaff, Ken Mason, Bill Wesley, Alex Conn, Gillian Stenning, Maurice Beardmore, Edgar Lawson, Tony Heasman, Robert Sharp, John McVicar, Peter Howard, John Vaughan, Mr A C Smith, Peter Monaghan, Lewis Grassby, Desmond Hellier, Alf Plumber, Ken Heasman, Mr H C Ross, Yvonne Bowles, Vera Campbell, Wally Oldfield, Sylvia Lawrence, Alan Lee, Geoffrey Robinson, Tom White, George Patmore, Alistair Sherlow, Tom Matthews, John Tasker, Derek McNee, Arnold Pope, John Stiles, Ian Arnott, Charles Wilkinson, Ed Carson, Larry Farrell, Jim Byrne, Matthew Conroy, Mr W A Green, Mrs J Vaughan, Mr R J Russell and Mr R Moss.

DEATHS

The passing of Charlie Baillie is a sad loss to the Crosbyana movement and Malcolm will provide a short tribute later in the magazine. Sadly I must also draw your attention to the passing of two UK members.

Arthur Holmes died in December 2002 aged 78. His wife Barbara has taken over his membership and she did so because Arthur gained so much from being a member of the ICC. **Gordon Hooper,** who passed away suddenly in January following a heart attack, was well known to many members for the help he provided to

their film and TV collections. We extend our sincere condolences to Edith Hooper, his family and friends.

MEMBERSHIP

It is pleasing to report that members have responded enthusiastically to my request for them to renew their subscriptions promptly. Our membership hovers above 1000 and we continue to attract new members via adverts and personal recommendations. Hopefully we will gain new members as a result of the publicity surrounding Bing's centenary celebrations. Despite the enthusiasm of the majority, 125 members (at February 22nd) have not yet renewed their membership. We trust that my appeal being sent to them on the 1st of March will result in a positive response and that all members will continue to value their involvement with the ICC.

Membership details by area as at February 15 are:-

British Isles	552
USA	392
Australia	35
Canada	26
Europe	20, plus New Zealand 3,

Brazil 3, Japan 2, Malaysia 1, South Africa 1.

We are certain that there are many more enthusiasts who would willingly join the ICC if only we could find a way of reaching them. Suggestions from members would be welcome.

CENTENARY CALENDAR

Response has been good and only 25 copies of the calendar remain, so please buy your copy now to avoid disappointment later.

Finally, I would like to thank members of the team for their dedication and hard work during the past twelve months. We can be proud of our achievements and our influence will continue to be evident during the centenary year.

Michael Crampton

INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31st DECEMBER 2002

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Subscriptions and donations	10289	Production of BING magazine (Covers 3 issues, including postage)	7500
Sales - Calendars	2774	Calendars	2755
AGM (Leeds) - receipts	868	AGM (Leeds) costs	1091
Sales - Jonzo CDs	180	Secretarial costs	724
Sales - Back issues	221	Jonzo CDs	209
Sales - Books	70	Editorial costs	101
Adverts	102	Books	130
Bank Interest 2002	14	Sundries	2
Bank balance 31/12/2001	3854	Bank balance 31/12/2002	5860
	18372		18372

Notes:

1. The accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure summary and amounts owing and stocks held are not shown. The club is able to cover its anticipated expenditure in 2003.

Michael Crampton. Secretary/Treasurer

THE CROSBY YEARS

by Gord Atkinson

During the time that my musical biography of Bing's life and times was in production, I was privileged to become acquainted with his best friends. No one was a closer companion than the irreplaceable Phil Harris. Bing once told me that no one could make him laugh louder than Phil, who lived a long and happy life. He was 92 when he left us. One of his most quoted lines lingers on, "If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself."

My friendship with Phil grew out of our mutual love of Bing. Of all my special memories, one that I often recall with a warm glow, took place at the 1981 unveiling of the Crosby bronze statue. That beautiful May afternoon at Gonzaga University I had the opportunity to not only introduce Phil but express publicly my great admiration for him. He charmed our audience with his anecdotes and heartfelt memories of

Gord and Phil Harris at Gonzaga in 1981.

Bing. His reminiscences and those of over 40 of Bing's friends have been preserved on our 14-hour series, "The Crosby Years" which, as most of you know by now, is being updated and re-issued on digitally re-mastered CDs for ICC collectors. All 14 will be released by the end of this year in celebration of the centenary of Bing's birth.

Now, Parts 7 and 8 will be available in late May to add to your collection. Our special guests on these two new releases include Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, Fred Astaire, Frank Capra, Donald O'Connor, James Van Heusen, Ken Carpenter, Des O'Connor and Gary Crosby.

Part 7 covers the mid-1930s to the early 1940s and the memorable movies and recordings of that era. Cecil B. De Mille introduces Bing starring in "Birth of the Blues" on "Lux Radio Theatre". The founding of Del Mar racetrack and Bing's passion for thoroughbred horses is a fascinating and amusing subject. Bing also remembers with great affection his long musical association with the Andrews Sisters.

Part 8 explores in depth the Crosby-Astaire films, "Holiday Inn" and "Blue Skies", and the "Road" movies with recollections by Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour and Fred Astaire. Bing, in retrospect, recalls his fondness for French ballads and his love for the "City of Lights", Paris.

All previous CDs are still available, Parts 1 to 6 and the 2-part "Crosby Christmas". CD orders are shipped from our distributor Anderson Publishing. Please see below for details.

Once again, my great gratitude for the kind and thoughtful comments that I have received from ICC members and for the continuing and encouraging support from my good friend Malcolm Macfarlane.

Gord Atkinson

(Editor: As before, a separate insert regarding these episodes of "The Crosby Years" is enclosed for UK readers, and US and Canadian members can obtain the CDs from:"The Crosby Years", Anderson Publishing, 102 Boyce Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K2B 6J2, Canada [Phone: (613) 721-0811]. For U.S. and Canadian orders please note that payment can be made by check, Visa or Mastercard. The new secure e-mail address for orders is: admin@anderpub.com

The cost remains at $22.00 U.S. for 2 CDs and $12.00 for one CD which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN$30.00 for 2 CDs and CAN$16.00 for one CD.

As Gord has mentioned, the earlier offers of the 2-part "A Crosby Christmas" and parts one to six of "The Crosby Years" remain available.)

Spokane, May 16-18, 2003

The details of the event are still evolving but it looks as though this will be the outline:

Friday, May 16

8:00 a.m. - 8.00 p.m. Registration - Crosby Student Center

2:00 - 4:30 p.m. Tour of Spokane, with Bing related highlights

Opening Ceremonies - Crosby Bronze Statue

7.00 - 9.00 p.m. "Moonlight Becomes You" reception - Foley Center Library, Rare Book Reading Room (private reception for fan club members, Crosby family and other invited guests)

Saturday, May 17

KSPS-TV documentary premiere

Bob DeFlores video presentation

Kathryn Crosby presentation

Kathryn Crosby book signing, Gord Atkinson CD signing

Gary Giddins lecture - "Bing the Technologist"

Celebrity panel discussion

7.00 - 10.00 p.m. "White Christmas Banquet" - ticket only, limited seating. Among those entertaining / speaking will be Rich Little, Kathryn Crosby and Gord Atkinson (who will also be MC).

Sunday, May 18

Mass / nondenominational service

Crosby Statue dedication - 1981 film

"Bing Crosby collection at Gonzaga" - Stephanie Plowman

Gary Giddins lecture - "Bing the Catholic and Bing the Gonzagan"

Book signings, Gary Giddins and Malcolm Macfarlane

Crosby family panel

Event to end around 5.00 p.m.

Elsewhere on the campus during the Saturday and Sunday, there will be film showings (including "Take Gonzaga", a 1960s film featuring Bing) and music presentations and possibly even a Crosby Karaoke session for those who can sing like Bing! Also there will be four separate displays of many rare Crosby artefacts. Crosby souvenir items will be on sale at the Crosby Student Center throughout the event.

For up-to-date information, see Gonzaga University's web site at:
http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/bing/

Michael Crampton and I hope to see many of you there.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Milwaukee, April 12, 2003

As part of Centennial Celebrations, the Ward Irish Music Archives will have a celebration of all things Bing Crosby on April 12. It will be held at the Irish Fest Center, which is located in Wauwatosa at 1532 Wauwatosa Ave, Milwaukee and will run from 1:00 until

5:00 p.m. Milwaukee houses the Ward Irish Music Archives, which is home to the largest public Bing Crosby record collection outside of Gonzaga University. The archives are part of Milwaukee Irish Fest, which is the largest Irish festival in the world. The goal of the Fest is to collect and preserve various Irish-music related material, then to educate and disseminate these materials through educational programs such as this conference. As we know, Bing had Irish ancestry on his maternal side and after this celebration, the Fest's Crosby exhibit will be taken to the conference at Gonzaga and then to other festivals throughout the summer.

Featured guests at this celebration in Milwaukee will be Kathryn Crosby and Buddy Bregman. The event will begin at 1:00 with the doors opening at noon. The celebration will include film clips from Bing's career, a panel discussion with Kathryn Crosby, Buddy Bregman and Greg Van Beek, a great collection of exhibits on Crosbyana throughout the Irish Fest Center and an autograph session. Tours of the Ward Irish Music Archives will also be available during the event. Refreshments will be available.

Tickets are $10 and for further details, contact: **Barry Stapleton,** Ward Irish Music Archives, Milwaukee Irish Fest Center, 1532 Wauwatosa Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53213 (phone: 414-476-3378, e-mail: barry@irishmusicarchive.com)

Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings

No, it's not the 1956 album but a brand new show which was put on at the FireBird Restaurant & Café, 365 West 46th Street, New York during February. Described as a "Bing Crosby Centennial Show", the publicity stated:

> "Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings!" is a Bing Crosby Centennial homage to the man who practically invented the 20th century popular song, and "created" the recording industry. He was the star who, for nearly half a century, reflected the best of America to itself—reassuringly, modestly, warmly. In all, Crosby sold over 400 million disks and recorded 368 charted records, compared to Sinatra's 209. Narrating this show, which he wrote, will be legendary arranger Buddy Bregman, a close friend of the Crosby family. Bregman, as a very young man, recorded with Bing Crosby the landmark album, "Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings" that became a double platinum disk. Appearing with Bregman are seven swinging stars—Broadway performers Eric Michael Gillett and Alicia Irving, as well as jazz artists Cleve Douglass and Barbara Porteus, along with instrumentalists Rich Siegel (piano), Ritt Henn (bass), and Adam James (drums).

The reviews were somewhat mixed with the *New York Times* in particular being very critical but Crosby fans who attended seemed to have enjoyed it. Kathryn Crosby herself saw the show on February 8. Our thanks are due to Buddy Bregman (of whom you will read more in our Hofstra report) for putting this tribute together.

Another show we mentioned in our last issue was Bing! Cherries. . .

Not Quite the "Pits", Bing! Cherries Shows Promise

Bing! Cherries **played at Joe Franklin's Memory Lane Restaurant at 160 East 45th Street in New York from October 16, 2002 until early December when it closed early. Judy Schmid (with assistance from Jane FitzGerald) tells us about it.**

It's difficult for me (and my new friend from Cincinnati, Ohio, Jane) to attend any type of Bing Crosby event and not vocalize along with the music. Inviting the attendees to sing along might be just what *Bing! Cherries* needs to bring in the crowds its performers so desperately want - it would also move the show from "sincere and earnest" (Jane's perfect description) to "fun and memorable". The singers - opera professionals tenor Mark Heimbigner and soprano Sarah Downs, along with the show's producer baritone Owen-Pahl Greene - have lovely voices and poise. Ms. Downs, in fact, showed a lot of playfulness in her numbers, which was well-received by the 25 people in attendance on Wednesday, November 13. Mr. Heimbigner's voice was clear and crisp, but perhaps not appropriate for songs from the "Great American Songbook" as made popular by Bing Crosby. Mr. Greene, the baritone, did a nice job, incorporating some of Bing's musical inflection in many of the numbers without making it a carbon-copy spoof - but he seemed a little uncomfortable despite the warm response from the attendees.

The accompanist, pianist Christopher Cooley, was probably the hardest-working member of the team - his touch was light and melodious - terrific accompanist as he never overwhelmed the singers. Dinner was quite tasty, although it came a little later than advertised, which meant we had to eat it in the dark (but eating did keep us from singing, which perhaps is what they wanted?). Jane and I were seated with three older gentlemen who didn't name Bing Crosby as their favorite vocalist, but they seemed to enjoy the show very much - perhaps more than we two Bing fans who knew every song by heart, every joyful turn of a note, every soulful lament - things that weren't quite there for us in this production. In addition, Joe Franklin's radio show was being broadcast live from the other room - something that's generally done on Tuesday nights and the mostly senior-citizen crowd at the bar was very vocal in responding to Joe's commentary. I'm sure this didn't help the Bing! Cherries performers, as it seemed to be

somewhat distracting.

Out of a five-star rating, I think I'd give it three stars - strong musicality, clear voices, and of course, a wonderful choice of entertainers to honor. Any show that honors Bing Crosby is a GOOD THING! My suggestions, as a musician and a performer myself, might be for the singers to show more real happiness rather than stage-smiles, more relaxation rather than perfect posture, and perhaps an invitation for attendees to sing along - not loudly so as to drown out the professionals, but to "feel" Bing in our hearts.

Judy Schmid

Leo McCarey season in New York

"People Are Funny: The Films of Leo McCarey," a series of 12 films, began on December 28 and ran through until January 9 at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater, West 65th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, New York. Naturally, the season included Bing's films *Going My Way* (1944) and *The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945) as well as others such *The Awful Truth* (1937), *Once Upon a Honeymoon* (1942) *My Son John* (1952) and *An Affair to Remember* (1957).

Animated Bing Crosby

In the past, we have given details of some of the singing models of Bing which are available and last November we received a copy of the Kleeneze Europe Ltd. brochure describing yet another version, which is obtainable in the UK and Ireland as well as the USA and Canada. Whether the item will still be available when you are reading this I don't know, but in the UK call 0870 333 6688 to find out. The relevant page is shown below.

I'll bet that many Bing Crosby fans were bought one of these models as a Christmas present. Ron Bosley received two! The Macfarlane family certainly had a lot of fun with our model over the holiday period.

Malcolm Macfarlane

A Crosby Centennial Collage

This is the title of an exhibition which has been on display at Queens College, 65-30 Kissena Blvd, between 50 and 51 Street, New York. It opened on March 28 and lasts until approximately April 11. Martin McQuade is the curator. The exhibition has been on display in the foyer of the Rosenthal Library at Queens College. For more information call 718-997-3700. The exhibition is adjacent to the permanent Louis Armstrong collection which is famously housed at the library. In conjunction with the exhibition there will be a concert on Sunday, April 6 at 3:00 p.m. in the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, Choral Room (room 264) at which Gary Giddins is scheduled to appear.

John Petters tributes

Our keen member John Petters is involved in two forthcoming tributes to Bing in the UK. The first is at Pontin's Holiday Centre, Blackpool from May 13 to May 16 inclusive. Titled *Tribute to Bing, Benny Goodman and Gene Krupa,* it will be hosted by John and he will introduce various jazz combos including the Kid Ory Tribute Band, Richard Bennett, Phil Mason's New Orleans All Stars, the Pete Allen Jazz Band and the Savannah Jazz Band. The price for the 4-day event is £169 per person and this includes full board and of course the music tickets.

The second tribute is *Bing - The Road to Romance, The Crosby Centenary Jazz Show* starring John Petters' Swing band. This will take place at Chiswick Town Hall, West London on May 29. Tickets £10. There is a freephone number which is 0800 4960673. We wish John every success with these events.

BING IN THE USA

HAIL. HOFSTRA!

Three years in the planning, and finally unfolding over three busy and unforgettable days at the Long Island campus of Hofstra University, the unique academic conference on "Bing! Crosby And American Culture" was well worth the wait. The results more than justified all of the efforts that went into this unprecedented in-depth examination of Bing's life and career.

Those ICC and Club Crosby members fortunate enough to attend came from around the world—for the opportunity of a lifetime—to share in this long overdue tribute to Bing as the most popular entertainer of the 20th century.

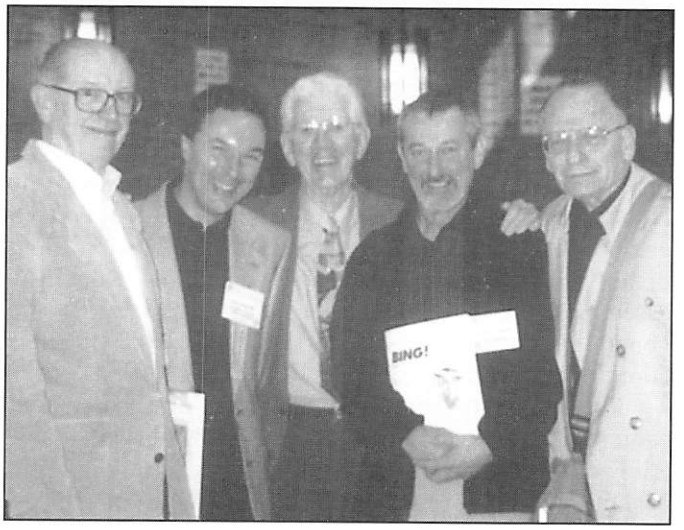
The Hofstra Conference was a great experience, and a great success, the likes of which has never occurred before and is not likely to be repeated. Laura and I were quite privileged to be a part of this outstanding event, and I was personally very pleased to have been an official consultant to Hofstra University for the conference, representing the ICC. This enabled me to offer various suggestions for topics to be covered by the official conference papers, as well as the names of personalities who should be invited to make presentations.

In addition, I also was asked to serve as moderator for one of the panels entitled "Fans Speak Of Bing" on the final morning of the three-day session. This panel was very well attended, even though it began at 8:30 a.m. following the gala banquet, which had extended into the late hours of the previous evening.

Although the conference itself only occupied the period from Thursday, November 13th through Saturday, November 16th, the Crosby experiences that Laura and I enjoyed extended over a full two weeks. They began the previous weekend, when our good friends Judith and Michael Crampton arrived at Dulles airport from England to spend several days with us in Northern Virginia, before we all traveled up to New York together via Amtrak and on to Hofstra by the Long Island Railroad.

And when Laura and I returned to Virginia after the conference ended, we were soon joined by Anne and Ken Barnes, who were making their first visit to Washington, D.C. before returning to London. We spent a delightful evening with Anne and Ken (dinner lasted some three hours, what with all of the Crosby discussion that took place), and the next day I escorted them on a tour of George Washington's home at Mount Vernon. I also was able to arrange a special interview for Ken with well-known Washington area radio broadcaster (and fellow ICC member) Rob Bamberger. Ken's interview will be broadcast over local station WAMU-FM (88.5) sometime in the near future.

All in all, the entire two weeks were a wonderful time for Laura and myself in so many ways, and all because of everything that Bing clearly continues to mean to so many people from all over the world.



Bing's International Musketeers at Hofstra - Wig Wiggins (USA), Ken Crossland (UK), Gord Atkinson (Canada), Michael Crampton (UK) and Harvey Shierr (USA)

MEETING OTHER CROSBY FANS

For me, one of the most delightful aspects of the Hofstra Conference was the opportunity to meet personally so many of my fellow ICC and Club Crosby members that I have gotten to know over the past decade through the mail and by telephone. Laura and I tried to keep a list of those that we were able to talk with, or with whom we shared lunch and dinner, during our four days at Hofstra. By the end of the conference, our list contained the names of more than 50 of our fellow members, plus spouses, but I am afraid that we lost track of many names and faces as the days sped by much too quickly. And that did not include others that we met, including those from the entertainment world, numerous friends and relatives of Bing, various academicians and authors Gary Giddins and Will Friedwald. Kathryn Crosby and Howard Crosby (Bing's nephew) who also were very much in evidence throughout the conference.

Laura and I even met other ICC members on the Long Island Railroad while traveling between Pennsylvania Station in downtown Manhattan and the Hofstra campus, if you can believe it. En route to Hofstra the day before the conference began, we were joined by our longtime Crosby friend from New York City, Harvey Shierr. And on our departure, our new friend from Down Under, Ron Field, rode back to the city with us. You just couldn't get away from Crosby fans, no matter what you were doing!

I won't try to name all of the others that we had the pleasure of meeting and spending time with—those who came from as far away as England and Australia, as well as from all across the United States—but only say what a wonderful experience it was to be able to enjoy their company and share their enthusiasm for Bing during this extraordinary event.

ATTENDANCE, FACILITIES AND SCHEDULING

Most of the Hofstra Conference panels and presentations took place in the busy university student center, which featured a sizeable cafeteria complex, a well-appointed bookstore and several meeting rooms, including a large, 380-seat auditorium where the major Crosby activities were scheduled.

There also was a smaller, 200-seat conference room located in the university library. This was on the other side of a busy six-lane highway which bisects the Hofstra campus but could be reached by foot via an enclosed skywalk. The library also featured an excellent display of Bing Crosby memorabilia specially assembled for the conference, which was open to the general public and Hofstra staff and students, as well as conference participants.

Crosby books were available for sale in the student center bookstore, and book signings by Kathryn Crosby, Richard Grudens, Gary Giddins and Malcolm Macfarlane also took place there. Some of Bing's recordings were played over a sound system in the cafeteria during the conference, and a large projection screen was available in the reception area for showing events taking place in the large auditorium to individuals who could not be there themselves. Bing certainly was very much a presence all over the student center throughout the three-day conference.

There were some 350 full-time registrants for the entire conference, but this did not include those who attended on a day-to-day basis, as well as many others who came only to the gala banquet on the Friday evening. The main auditorium was almost filled to capacity during the major presentations that took place there. Overall, the attendance for Bing's conference was higher than for the one for Frank Sinatra that was held in 1998, not long after Frank's death.

Public television station KSPS of Spokane, Washington, had representatives at Hofstra to tape interviews with a number of conference participants, including myself, for possible use in a documentary about Bing's life that will be shown on May 18 in Spokane and then be made available to other PBS stations.

The gala banquet on the Friday evening was perhaps the highlight of the conference. Various personalities spoke and performed during the banquet, including Robert Merrill, Joe Bushkin, Gary Giddins and Kathryn Crosby. Margaret Whiting was the featured performer, substituting for Tony Martin who could not attend because of illness. Margaret provided a warm and pleasant conclusion to the evening with songs and remarks delivered in an easy-going style reminiscent of her good friend. Rosemary Clooney, with whom she had toured for a number of years.

Not only did the Crosby fans fill the Hofstra student center for three full days, they didn't even want to leave! A farewell reception was held at the university library on Saturday evening after the last presentation. Even though the weather had turned rainy and quite cold, a large percentage of us were still there, many more than usual for such closing ceremonies I understand.

PRESENTATIONS

I will not go into detailed descriptions of the more than 30 formal presentations, panel discussions, and film and video showings that took place during the conference, as such details will be found elsewhere in this issue of BING. These major aspects of the conference ranged from large groups discussing aspects of Bing's life from their personal knowledge and experience to academic papers analyzing particular facets of his career in considerable detail.

From my perspective, the personal remembrances of those who actually knew or worked with Bing were the most interesting. The academic papers were less so, especially because many of their authors insisted on reading them verbatim, rather than speaking directly to the audience as other participants did. But the overall impact of the various presentations and panels was most impressive.

My own favorites among the many presentations were the excellent tribute to Bing's longtime friend. Rosemary Clooney, the panel entitled "Working With Bing" (comprised of musicians and producers who had been at Bing's side in the broadcast and recording studios), and "Remembering Bing Crosby" (featuring Bing's family members and close personal friends who knew him over the years) .

Fortunately, as you will read elsewhere, audio cassette tapes of all of the presentations can be purchased from the Hofstra University Cultural Center, and it is planned that the full texts of the official papers will be published in book form at some future date.

In addition, interested ICC members can order a copy of the fully-illustrated, 50-page conference booklet as an excellent souvenir for those who were not able to attend themselves. This booklet contains details of all of the activities that took place and the official participants for each panel. It is reasonably priced at only $7.50 in U.S. funds (postpaid). Please contact Michael Crampton (U.K. and European members) or myself (U.S. and Canadian members) if you would like to obtain a copy of the conference booklet or receive further details about ordering any of the audio tapes.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Hofstra Conference was a magnificent tribute to the artist and man that we, and so many others, still admire—even 25 years after his death.

My only criticism was that there was just too much to do, too many places to go, and too many activities taking place at the same time. With such a full schedule, some consideration was given to extending the conference to a fourth day, but this could not be done for logistical and financial reasons.

I would like to close this report with mention of my exchange of letters with Professor Stuart Rabinowitz, President of Hofstra University, in which I expressed our appreciation for everything that was done to honor Bing on this unique occasion. As I wrote, it was, indeed, a

marvelous experience for everyone involved, and we are most appreciative of all of Hofstra's efforts on Bing's behalf.

NEW MEMBERS AS A RESULT OF HOFSTRA

One welcome outcome of the Hofstra Conference has been the addition thus far of another 15 members to the ICC/Club Crosby ranks. During the conference, I provided leaflets and discussed our activities with various participants, and more Crosby fans are seeking us out as a result.

In the process, we have acquired a new, and most enthusiastic, honorary ICC member in the person of Rory Burke, who not only is the daughter of Bing's favorite lyricist Johnny Burke, but also Bing's god-daughter. Rory was recruited, if you will, by my wife Laura on the conference shuttle bus while traveling between our hotel and the Hofstra campus! Laura and I have spoken with Rory again since she returned to California, and she is extremely pleased to be part of our efforts to preserve Bing's memory and musical legacy.

By the way, there is a fascinating photograph of a group of the Hollywood elite of the 1940s taken at the christening ceremony for Rory and her twin sister, Regan, in Gary Giddins' biography of Bing, "A Pocketful of Dreams". In addition to Rory's god-parents, Bing and Dixie Lee, and Regan's god-parents, Bob and Dolores Hope, also present were many other well-known entertainment personalities of the day. Judging by the photograph, it must have been quite a ceremony.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Rory Burke from all of us.

Laura, Rory and Wig at Hofstra

A CENTENNIAL ANTHOLOGY OF BING'S DECCA RECORDINGS

Over the past two years, I have made a number of suggestions to Universal Music in Los Angeles for possible CD releases of more of Bing's Decca recordings. Unfortunately, market conditions in the industry have prevailed against the acceptance of any of these recommendations before now.

However, I am pleased to report that fellow ICC member Andy McKaie, senior vice president at Universal Music, has been able to convince his corporate bean counters that this centennial year of Bing's birth is the proper occasion to honor him by offering a new selection of his Decca masters to the American public. As a result, I have been asked to compile 50 tracks for a 2-CD set comprising a representative group of the best from Bing's Decca years. This set will begin with "June In January" from 1934 and extend through "Around The World" from 1956.

While writing the booklet notes, I wanted to avoid the usual chronological sequence of tracks. So I decided, instead, to group the tracks in special categories that would better illustrate the broad versatility of Bing's recorded legacy. Accordingly, I have arranged the songs on the two discs in the following manner:

(1) Early Hits (2) Country And Western (3) Songs Of The Islands (4) Irish Favorites (5) Bing's Duets (6) Swing With Bing (7) Film Favorites (8) Bing And The Instrumentalists (9) Americana (10) The Voice Of Christmas (11) Around The World

Titles chosen include most of Bing's Gold Records and top hits from the Decca catalog, as well as some of his re-recordings of earlier best sellers for RCA Victor and Brunswick. The following seven songs will be new to CD in the United States (although they have been issued previously overseas):

(1) "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams" (1939) (2) "Star Dust" (1939) (3) "I Found A Million Dollar Baby" (1940) (4) "Please" (1940) (5) "You Are My Sunshine" (1941) (6) "Sioux City Sue" (1945) (7) "Ol' Man River" (1955)

Even though this centennial CD set is designed to appeal to the general public, rather than the diehard Crosby collector, I hope that ICC and Club Crosby members will decide to add it to their own music libraries as well.

It has been a pleasure for me to work again with Universal Music to create this commemorative CD release honoring Bing's centennial year. And it will be even more enjoyable to see Bing back in the music stores and in the mail order catalogs—not to mention on the internet—as a result. I would like to express my thanks, once more, to Andy McKaie for giving me the opportunity to do this for Bing as part of our ongoing effort to keep the general public aware of the artistry of the most popular singer of the 20th century.

"Bing Crosby: A Centennial Anthology Of His Decca Recordings" will be released on April 8th. Further details of this 2-CD set are given in the "Keeping Track" section of this edition of the magazine and a review will appear in the Summer issue of BING.

F. B. (Wig) Wiggins
February 10, 2003

HOFSTRA November 14-16, 2002

Our thanks are due to Wig for his most interesting and comprehensive overview but how can we go on to cover the detail of this incredible event? There is so much to tell you but to give a summary, let's first list the various sessions held at the conference and then comment on a

few of them.

Thursday, November 14
Plenary Session: Opening Ceremonies
Panel I-A The Songwriters and Bing Crosby
Panel I-B Film I - Bing and American Catholicism
Plenary Session: Interview with Buddy Bregman
Panel II Tribute to Rosemary Clooney
Panel III-A "White Christmas": The Song
Panel III-B Bing Abroad - I The United Kingdom and Australia
Panel IV-A Presentation and Performance
Panel IV-B Bing Crosby and World War II
Panel V-A An Evening of Crosby Films and Videos
Panel V-B The Crooners
Panel V-C Bing: Influences

Friday, November 15
Panel VI Working with Bing
Keynote Address "Bing Crosby: Nothing Is What It Seems"
Panel VII-A Bing and Fred
Panel VII-B Radio Hosts and Bing Crosby
Plenary Session: Remembering Bing Crosby
Panel VIII-A The Cultural and Historical Background of the Crosby Era
Panel VIII-B Bing and Other Singers -I
Pre-Banquet Events: Walking With Bing Down Memory Lane
Surprise Video Presentation
Special address: "My Last Years With Bing"
Gala Banquet

Saturday, November 16
Panel IX-A Bing and Other Singers - II
Panel IX-B Fans Speak of Bing
Panel X-A The Collections
Panel X-B Bob and Bing / Bing and Bob
Panel XI-A Film - II - The Actor
Panel XI-B Bing and Jazz
Plenary Session: Interview with Nick Perito
Panel XII-A Film - III - Crosby's Versatility in Film
Panel XII-B Bing and Louis
Panel XIII-A Bing and Frank
Panel XIII-B Bing Abroad- II The Irish Connection
Panel XIV-A Bing and the Girl Vocalists
Panel XIV-B Bing and Business

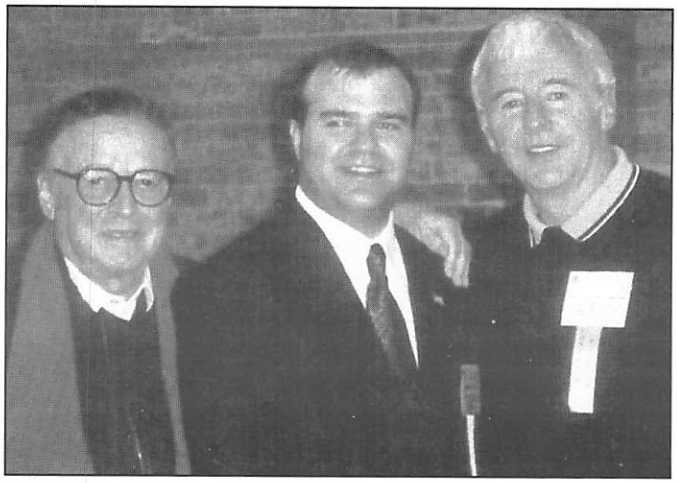
I had checked into my hotel on the Wednesday evening and quickly met up with Wig and Laura Wiggins, Ken Gray, Michael and Judy Crampton and several others. A shuttle minibus service was in operation to take us to and from the University and most times this turned up.

We reported to the University early on the Thursday morning and everywhere we looked was a friendly face. People who had corresponded for years but never met were shaking hands and greeting each other enthusiastically. Speaking for myself, I felt immediately comfortable with everyone I met and the event as a whole must be one of the friendliest I have ever attended

A merry group comprising (left to right) Arne Fogel, Carol Sherland, Judy Schmid and Jane Fitzgerald with Michael Crampton kneeling.

Greg Van Beek captured the emotions of it all on his posting on the Internet Museum bulletin board.

> "I returned home from the conference last evening around 7:45, and I still have a (now) permanent smile on my face from what I had just witnessed during the past three days! I met so many wonderful people, many of the 'regulars' here on these message boards. It honestly felt like a big family reunion! . . .
>
> The event was a HUGE success, I'm sure even far exceeding the expectations of those involved with co-ordinating it. The local PBS station from Spokane was there taping interviews with a lot of the people presenting for a documentary on Bing and his impact on American culture, which they feel confident will air nationwide by next Christmas (it's planned to have it run locally around Spokane in time for the centennial). They sat me down, powdered me up, and let the camera roll, but I doubt I said anything they'll use. It's only going to be an hour long show, and there were a lot more prominent people to give air time to than me. More good publicity came via the NY Newsday newspaper. It had a nice cover story on Bing and the event. . .
>
> The film and TV clips were shown on a HUGE screen, as large as in a movie theater. George O' Reilly put together a wonderful video presentation titled "An Ordinary Guy Who Could Carry a Tune". Wayne [Martin], you should've been there to see your name spelled out as big as a marquee sign during the closing credits! And of course Bob DeFlores had a fantastic hour of rare Crosby footage dating from 1928-1961, followed by an hour of rare TV footage compiled by Martin McQuade.



Greg Van Beek (centre) flanked on the left by Nick Perito and on the right by your Editor.

Now (finally!) let me get to the reason I started this message in the first place! The entire conference was recorded, and audio cassettes of all of the panels are available for.... better sit down before I tell you.... are you sitting?? Good. Brace yourself.... for $350. They will be mailed in 3 weeks if you order now. Of course, if you wish to pick and choose panels, they are available for $10 each, plus $15 s/h. They have an order form, but really all you need to do is list the panel number and title and what day they took place on a piece of paper and send it along with your check to:
Audio Visual Services
200 Hofstra University
Student Center, Room 201
Hempstead, NY 11549
(516) 463-5113

It appears the $350 cost for the entire conference includes postage.

One last observation - Bing's music permeated throughout virtually the entire campus! The cafeteria had piped in music- I listed to cuts from the Bregman album while my hamburger was being cooked. I hope the students took notice and gave a listen. I didn't hear anyone complaining, which was a good sign!"

Greg Van Beek

I particularly wished to reproduce some of Greg's note because written as it was just hours after the conclusion of the conference, it also captures the enthusiasm and passion of the event which Wig has already highlighted. But let's go back to the beginning again.

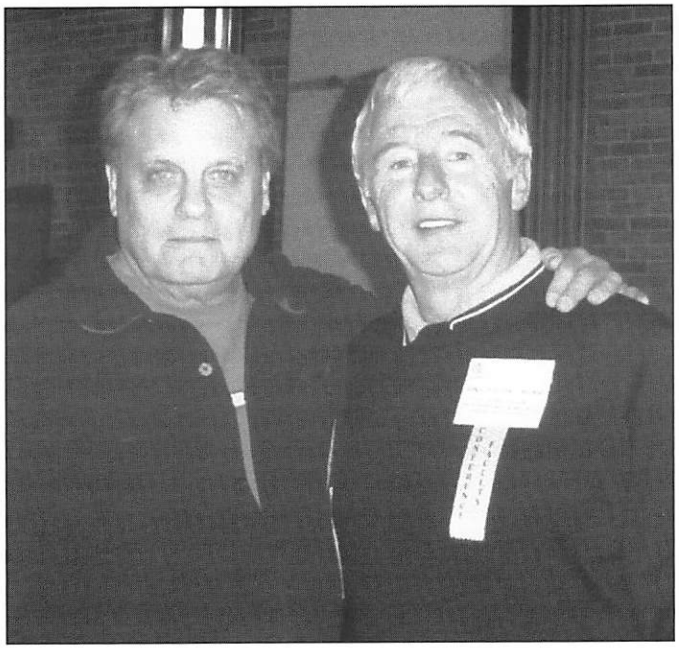
Plenary Session: Opening Ceremonies

The opening ceremonies were linked by the Conference Director, Dr. Ruth Prigozy, Ph.D, Professor of English and Film Studies at Hofstra University (and an expert on F. Scott Fitzgerald as well as being a Dick Haymes fan!). Ruth introduced our President, Kathryn Crosby, Ken Barnes, Buddy Bregman, noted authors Will Friedwald and Gary Giddins, Nick Perito, singer Margaret Whiting, Linda Emmett (Irving Berlin's daughter), Nicki Lee Barbour Foster (Peggy Lee's daughter), songwriter Ervin Drake, Rory Burke (Johnny Burke's daughter) and Steve Crosby (Gary Crosby's adopted son).

Kathryn Crosby mentioned her new book (which we review elsewhere in the magazine) and also that she needed help to organise her basement as there is mould growing on some of the video tapes stored there. Bob DeFlores picked up on this and was later locked in discussions with Kathryn, Let's hope some of the tapes surface. Kathryn read a letter from the President of Ireland (no doubt procured by our friend George O'Reilly) in which good wishes were extended for the success of the Conference.

Buddy Bregman, a nephew of songwriter Jule Styne, was known to me through the "Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings" album and also as the producer of the 1967 TV programme *A Little Bit of Irish*. I had not realised what a busy life he has had. He started out as conductor and arranger for the West Coast vocal group 'Cheers' which had a hit with "(Bazoom) I Need Your Lovin'" in 1954, went on to be the A & R head of Verve Records where he arranged and conducted the Ella Fitzgerald albums "The Cole Porter Songbook" and "The Rodgers & Hart Songbook", a producer and director for BBC-TV, Head of Entertainment with London Weekend TV in the UK and so on. He had been friendly with the sons of Bing's first marriage as a youth and he attended the recording session when Bing and Al Jolson waxed "Alexander's Ragtime Band". If we assume that he was say aged 25 when he worked on the album with Bing in 1956 then he must be 71 now but he looked like a man in his mid-fifties. Buddy also worked with Gary Crosby and apparently Bing asked him to keep an eye on Gary and to tell him if anything strange happened. Buddy had occasion to report three instances to Bing, the first was when Gary was found passed out in a chair at the Tropicana, the second was another occasion when Gary drank too much and Buddy didn't feel able to divulge the third to us. In a later discussion with Buddy, I mentioned that he had enough personality for two people and I queried how he managed to look so young. I told him I was 59 and I then asked him point blank how old he was and he point blank refused to tell me! The Internet Movie Database gives his year of birth as 1940 which would mean that he was 16 when he did the album with Bing! There's something wrong somewhere.

Buddy talked about the album he made with Bing, saying that Bing was a little reluctant to become involved to start with as he thought that Buddy's accompaniment might not suit his style ("too jazzy") but after Bing negotiated a particularly favourable contract (10% of the gross without deduction for recording costs), he participated enthusiastically. The 12 tracks



Buddy Bregman and your Editor locked in an embrace!

were completed in just two three-hour sessions which both finished early. The sessions started at 9 a.m. and Buddy laughed as he recalled the state of the musicians falling into the studio at that time of the morning, most of them not having been to bed! Bing never once said "let's do it again."

Ken Barnes talked about the various albums he made with Bing, and Will Friedwald described the incredible impact Bing had on the show business scene. Gary Giddins welcomed all of us fans and he was followed by Nick Perito, who acted as musical director for Bing and then Perry Como for many years. Nick described "two of the most gentle yet dynamic singers in the world - Bing Crosby and Perry Como." He went on to say that Bing was the first man to use the microphone properly.

Panel I-A The Songwriters and Bing Crosby

It is not my intention to cover every panel but I will touch on those which I attended where significant comment is appropriate. Many panels ran concurrently with other panels and as Wig has mentioned, it was simply not possible to attend them all in their entirety. The songwriters panel immediately followed the opening ceremonies and the contributors were particularly strong with Linda Emmett (Irving Berlin's daughter), Rory Burke (Johnny Burke's daughter), singer Margaret Whiting, Ervin Drake (writer of songs such as "I Believe", "It Was a Very Good Year", "Across the Wide Missouri" and "Come to the Mardi Gras") and Will Friedwald. This opened with a discussion on everyone's favourite Bing song and Linda Emmett came up with "Be Careful It's My Heart". She described how her father Irving Berlin was "as nervous as a rabbit smelling stew" when demonstrating the *Holiday Inn* songs to Bing who reassured Irving that there was no need to worry about "White Christmas". Mr. Berlin thought that the hit song would be "Be Careful It's My Heart."

Ervin Drake made some good contributions to the discussion and he picked out "Now It Can Be Told" and "Come to the Mardi Gras". Rory Burke, our new Honorary member, is a lively and likeable character whom I later learnt is training to be a make-up expert specialising in bullet holes and wounds for TV and the screen. Her favourite was "Swinging on a Star". Margaret Whiting picked out "My Ideal" as her favoured song and she went on to say that Bing could have sung a cook book or dictionary and made it attractive. She felt that he was the finest singer we have ever had in America. She also liked his version of "I Can't Escape From You". Margaret worked closely with Johnny Mercer and she said that Mercer constantly talked about Bing.

Book signings

It had been announced that Kathryn Crosby would be signing copies of her book so I stayed with the Songwriters panel for a while to allow the inevitable crowd to disperse. Leaving the panel early, I was shocked to discover that only two copies of Kathryn's book remained unsold. One was reserved for the President of Hofstra and I quickly snapped up the other. Kathryn kindly autographed it for me. Richard Grudens was sitting alongside her and he also signed one of his books for me.

The next day it was the turn of Gary Giddins and I to undertake a book signing session. The paperback version of Gary's masterpiece about Bing is now available and it seems to be selling well.

Panel II Tribute to Rosemary Clooney

Chaired by entertainer Errol Dante, this began with a video extract from the *Hollywood Palace* show of February 19, 1966 in which Rosie sang a torch song medley. Projected on to a huge screen, the projection system often caused some loss of quality which was particularly disappointing to those such as Bob DeFlores, Martin McQuade and George O'Reilly who supplied video material to the conference. The distortion produced by this projection process sometimes tended to make Bing look like a little fat man with big ears!

The contributors to this panel were Margaret Whiting (now aged 78 and who toured with Rosemary for 12 years in "4 Girls 4" together with Helen O'Connell and Rose Marie), Rosemary's son Gabriel, Joe Bushkin (86 years of age), Gary Giddins, Ken Barnes, John Oddo (Rosemary's musical director), Deborah Grace Winer (author of "The Last Girl Singer") and Joe & Sal Scognamillo (from Patsy's Italian restaurant). Miss Whiting became quite emotional as she talked about her old friend and she was followed by Joe Bushkin who said that Rosemary was like "one of the boys" and he then talked about her rapport with Bing. Gary Giddins opined that Rosie was an even better performer during her time with Concord Records than previously, calling her "an extraordinary artist" who had a gift for friendship. Gary described how he was anxious to interview Dean Martin in connection with his Bing book and Rosemary subsequently took him to the

restaurant where Dino dined each night. When Dean saw Clooney, they embraced and both stood there crying. Gary never did get his interview as it was just not appropriate that night.

Ken Barnes described working with Rosemary at the London Palladium. John Oddo said that she was comfortable with all kinds of backing but that she lost the high end of her voice and her breath as she got older, resulting in her becoming more conversational. Deborah Grace Winer described Rosie as the funniest person she had ever known and son Gabriel said that his mother liked to rehearse in depth so that she could appear to "throw it away" in the final performance. The final contributions were from the proprietors of Patsy's Restaurant in New York where Rosemary and her sister Betty had many free meals when they were starting out.

In response to questions, Gabriel Ferrer confirmed that it was the murder of Robert Kennedy that sent Rosemary "over the edge" and that it was Bing and Merv Griffin who brought her back to the forefront of showbusiness. The lack of hand or roving microphones made it difficult for questions from the floor to be heard in the large Cultural Centre Theatre and I know that the organisers will be looking to remedy this at future conferences.

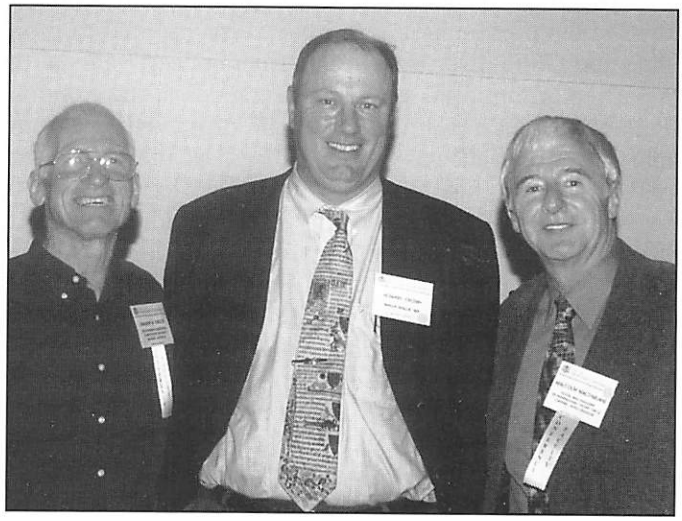
This very nice tribute to a great lady concluded with video clips from the Edsel show.

Panel III-B Bing Abroad - I The United Kingdom and Australia

A conference like this needs strong moderators (chairmen) to sure that each session runs smoothly and on time and not all of them were able to achieve this. This session was "hijacked" by Joe Bushkin's son-in-law who had a video of Bing and Joe Bushkin entertaining in Norway in 1977 and I think the whole of the session would have been used for this if the moderator had not eventually called a halt. As it was, the session overran by at least 45 minutes and both Gord Atkinson and I had to leave early as we were involved in the panel on World War II. Before I left however, I first heard Ken Barnes telling of his time working with Bing and of the final "Seasons" session. Ken explained that the first video tape recording he ever saw was shown him to by Joe Bushkin and at this point in the session, the Norway medley featuring Bing and Joe was shown for about 20 minutes.

Joe Bushkin then described how Bing came to put together his "Crosby" medley. Joe had played at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am banquet for about seven years, often supporting Phil Harris. (Bing described Joe and Phil as "a blow to clean living".) Bing himself had not sung at the Pro-Am for some years and he gave Joe a list of about 70 songs and asked him to compile a medley using some of these. This Joe duly did and the rest is history as they say, with the medley becoming an outstanding part of Bing's final stage performances. Joe and his quartet all received Rolex watches from Bing. Joe said that he misses Bing every day of his life.

It was then the turn of our own Ken Crossland to present his paper on "Michael Holliday - Britain's Bing Crosby." Introduced incorrectly as "Ken Grossland", Ken opened with some extracts of Michael singing songs such as "Dear Hearts and Gentle People", "Way Back Home" and "The Old Lamplighter" and clearly those who had not heard him sing before were stunned by the likeness to the older Bing voice. Ken told the Holliday story well and he was well received by the audience. It is most unfortunate that the taping of Ken's session went awry and most of it is badly distorted and inaudible.



Graham Pascoe (left) with Howard Crosby (centre) and that Editor chap again

The next speaker was Graham Pascoe, a likeable Australian with whom I had corresponded and whom I met at the hotel. It was unfortunate that I had to leave as he began to speak but fortunately I have since received a copy of Graham's paper and also heard a tape of his presentation and I can tell you that he has done some most original and detailed research into Bing's impact on the Australian show business scene. First of all we need to know something about the population of Australia. This vast country has only 19.8 million people in it at present but back in Bing's great years the population was even smaller:

1930	6.5 million
1940	7.0 million
1950	8.3 million

Graham had uncovered sales figures for Bing's 78 rpm records and for instance "White Christmas" which was released there in the winter of 1943 had sold 43,097 copies up to 1957. Surprisingly this was not Bing's biggest-selling Australian 78 and that honour goes to the coupling of "Silent Night" and "Adeste Fideles" which had sold 89,234 copies by 1955. Naturally these sales seem relatively small but they are not when compared to the total population. Graham related how the Dick Powell record "Thanks a Million" / "I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams" sold only 984 copies before it was deleted in 1941 and this gives a better idea of Bing's comparative popularity on record. On radio, Bing was also the most heard artist and Graham gave statistics to justify the claim. In 1947, there were eight Melbourne radio stations and seven of these broadcast Crosby programs for a total of 380 minutes (i.e. more than six hours) each week. A similar story is evident at the movies and whilst box office receipts figures are not available, a good alternative indication is the length of the run on first release. For instance at Sydney's Prince

Edward Theatre in the 1940s, sixteen Crosby features were shown and 75% of them ran for five weeks or more whereas only 40% of non-Crosby movies ran for 5 weeks or more. *Going My Way* ran for an amazing 21 weeks! Overall this was an interesting paper from Graham which confirmed the substantial influence Bing had on Australia.

The final speaker was Colin Stewart and whilst I missed his presentation too, I have also listened to it on tape and Colin discussed Bing's final concert years with a particular emphasis on his appearances at the London Palladium which Colin attended. He stressed the warmth and affection that was shown to Bing at the Palladium and illustrated his talk with excerpts from the 1976 recording of the Palladium show. Colin had to cut short his session but he finished with examples of the audience singing along with Bing at the Palladium. Colin, like me, was amazed at the power of Bing's voice at the conclusion of the Palladium concert.

The questions at the end of the whole session produced several interesting discussions. It seems that every country had to have it's own "Bing Crosby" and Ken Crossland stated out that the "British Bing Crosby" started with Al Bowlly, went through Denny Dennis to Michael Holliday. Australia had several "Bing Crosbys" as well and these were highlighted by Graham Pascoe. The talk moved on to Bing's image in later life and Ken Crossland made the point that the Crosby concept with the general public was probably better in the UK because we did not have the frequent Minute Maid adverts (which may have become tiresome) nor some of the weaker Christmas shows. We missed out on most of the early 70s shows and came back in to the series with the 1975 "extravaganza" which had Fred Astaire as the main guest.

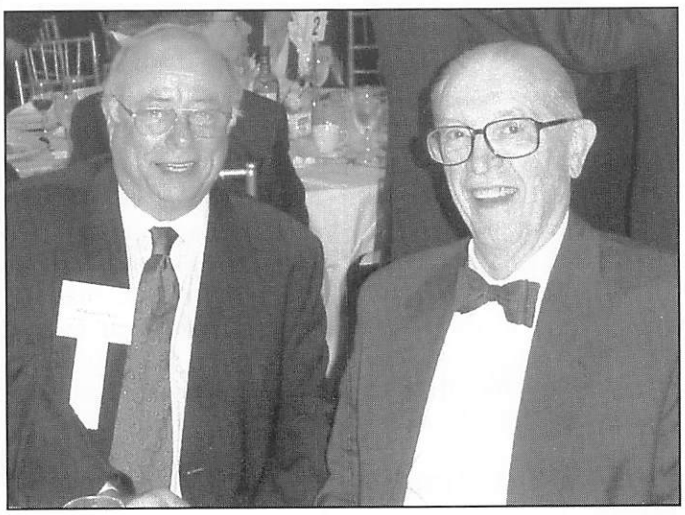
Panel IV-B Bing Crosby and World War II

This was the panel at which I was scheduled to present my paper on "Bing's Entertainment and War Bond Sales Activities During World War II". The guidance which all those presenting papers received was that they should submit the written version one month before the conference and that the paper should be delivered within a 20-minute time span. With four papers to be presented within a one hour 15 minute session, it did not take a genius to realise that there would simply not be enough time for all the papers to be presented and for the moderator (Gord Atkinson on this occasion) to add linking comments. I cut my presentation back to about 10 minutes and even then when you are reading a formal paper, as Wig has already observed, it's hard work for the audience unless you are a trained actor. However I duly delivered my bit and it was flattering to hear the two academics (Deborah Dolan, Asst. Professor of Library Services at Hofstra and Mary Anne Schofield, Asst. Professor of Core Humanities, Villanova University, PA) who followed me quoting from my book.

One important side benefit of the conference is that the many academics who delivered papers will have realised just how significant Bing was and in turn they will be telling their students and preserving Bing's legacy.

Panel V-A An Evening of Crosby Films and Videos

This first day at Hofstra had started at 8:15 a.m. and with those of us from the UK having body clocks which were 5 hours in front, a session lasting until 10 p.m. looked to be a challenge. However this proved not to be the case, as first Bob DeFlores presented some "Rare Moments with Bing Crosby". This included some very rare footage including excerpts from *Two Plus Fours, Please, Here Is My Heart, Confessions of a Co-Ed* and many more.



Bob DeFlores with Wig at the banquet.

Bob was followed by ICC member Martin McQuade, a video and music archivist, who presented a superb programme featuring highlights of Bing's TV career. He included extracts from Bing's first GE shows from 1954, *High Tor*, the sitcom series, *The Road to Lebanon, Dr. Cook's Garden* and the Barbara Walters Special from May 1977. The ICC is close to publishing a book about Bing's TV career and meeting Martin has come just in time. I passed our virtually completed manuscript over to Martin for his perusal and he has been able to fill in some gaps for us.

Martin was also the Guest Curator of an exhibition about Bing at the Hofstra Museum which ran from November 11 to January 10, 2003. Many rare exhibits, mostly from Martin's own collection were on display. Gonzaga University, the Pebble Beach Company, the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club and the Pittsburgh Pirates also contributed exhibits. I was interested to see that Mr. McQuade gave a handsome acknowledgement to Fred Romary (our old 'Crosby Collector' friend) for his help.

At the conclusion of Martin's presentation, I decided to forego the opportunity to watch *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* again and I took myself off to bed. It had been a long first day, much of which Judy Crampton and my wife Pat spent shopping at a nearby mall!

Panel VI Working with Bing

Day 2 started at 9 a.m. with this very rewarding panel chaired by Ruth Prigozy and featuring Ken Barnes, Buddy Bregman, Skitch Henderson and Nick Perito.

Skitch, now aged 84 and originally from

Birmingham in England, talking very lucidly and sincerely, described how he met Bing in the late 1930s at a social event and at his request played "Moonburn" for him. They went to the Rose Bowl together, became friends and later Skitch went off to be a fighter pilot with the RAF in WWII in North Africa. He bumped into Bing in London in 1944 and he described Bing as being like a surrogate father to him and "a rare human being." Although taciturn at times, Bing took a real interest in Skitch's welfare and it appears that he may have had a hand in having Skitch transferred to safer military duties. As we know, Bing insisted on having Skitch as his pianist on *Philco Radio Time* and this really launched his career.

Skitch described how Bing once caught him having a physical encounter with an agent and Bing took him on one side and told him to always avoid confrontations saying "Screaming and yelling doesn't accomplish anything." Bing also gave "Skitch" his stage name (he was christened Lyle Russell Cedric Henderson). Skitch said that Bing was the most disciplined performer he ever worked with and that it meant a lot to Skitch for him to be at the conference on behalf of Bing. He described him as a fantastic human being. Bing often wrote to him giving advice such as "Be good to the workers." In responding to questions, Skitch refused to comment on the differences between working with Bing and Frank Sinatra. One gained the impression that he did not want to be rude about Frank! Skitch is the founder / conductor of the New York Pops.

Nick Perito first worked with Bing when he was the accordion player on the *Ed Sullivan Show* of November 11, 1956. Years later, when Nick attended the funeral of Mitchell Ayres (the musical director for the *Hollywood Palace* series), he was asked to take over from Mitchell on the show. His first Palace show with Bing was broadcast on October 11, 1969 and before the taping started, Bing asked to see Nick. Mr. Perito indicated that this is the usual thing with top artists as they want to specify how they should be accompanied but Bing didn't have this in mind. He said to Nick "How much are you going to pay me to keep quiet that you were an accordion player?" It seems that accordion players are often mocked by their fellow musicians. Nick was later asked to work with Bing on his Christmas 1969 TV special and he was requested to write a new arrangement of "White Christmas" as the old one was too high for Bing by then. This assignment worried Nick somewhat but fortunately Bing liked what he had done and used it from then on until his death. Nick said that Bing was a delight to work with.

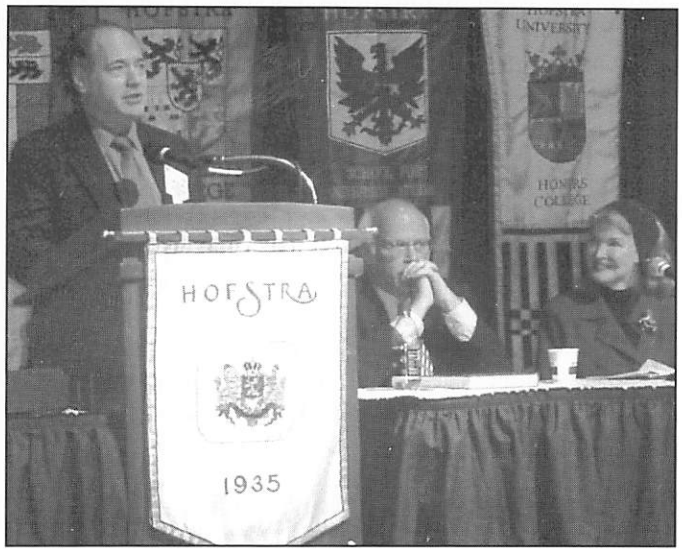
Buddy Bregman echoed Nick's sentiments stating that Bing was always very calm when they were making their 1956 album and when Buddy worked with him in the 1967 TV special *A Little Bit of Irish*, he found Bing still very nice and co-operative. He then said quite sincerely that "Bing was the finest man he had ever known in his life."

Our own Ken Barnes talked about his initial meeting with Bing and how the United Artists management were concerned as to whether Bing could still sing after his 1974 operation which resulted in him losing part of his lung. To overcome these doubts, Ken arranged a small session in Los Angeles first and as we know, that turned out well and Bing was launched on the first of several albums for UA. Ken described Bing's trip to the UK to make the first album and it seems that on this occasion Bing was provided with two bodyguards even though he usually travelled without an entourage. In an early encounter with the press, a bodyguard manhandled a cameraman and Bing quickly asked for the bodyguards to be dispensed with as he did not like such behaviour. In response to questions, Ken said that he hoped that the "Seasons" album would be released on CD in 2003.

This was a very heart-warming session and whilst some show-business people can sometimes be accused of insincerity, this was certainly not the case here. Working with Bing had made a real impact on all concerned and they all spoke with real warmth.

Keynote Address: "Bing Crosby: Nothing Is What It Seems"

This was delivered by Gary Giddins who needs no introduction to readers of BING magazine. Gary played an important part in the conference making significant and thoughtful contributions to many panels. The title of his keynote address was derived from a theme running through the films of Fritz Lang, namely nothing that seems obvious on the surface turns out to be true. When seeking a publisher for his book on Bing, Gary had written a short proposal of about 15 pages and a bidding war developed. The book was published about ten years later and Gary assured us that all who have read his book would not think that the proposal and the book were by the same person. Everything he thought he knew about Bing was turned on its head, with the exception of his art which had drawn Gary to him in the first place. Gary had read "The Hollow Man" and thought that it might be useful background for him. He liked the idea of writing a book about a dual figure, someone who is perceived by the public as the absolute soul of warmth but who in real life is cold, difficult and impossible to know. That was the book that Gary expected to write.



Gary Giddins addresses the conference.

As he began his interviews, he compared notes with film producer Brian Johnson who was working on a documentary about Bing and they both agreed that they

had uncovered nothing detrimental about Bing whatsoever. As he continued his research, Gary tackled story after story about Bing to get to the bottom of some of the anecdotes he had read and he described one scurrilous story about Bing and Grace Kelly which appeared in no less than 6 books. With commendable tenacity, Gary had kept seeking the source and eventually confirmed that the story was fictitious. Gary gave an other example involving Bing being cruel to his hunting dog and eventually it was none other than Gary Crosby who confirmed that the story was rubbish.

Mr. Giddins confessed to one of his own mistakes in his book when after being so advised by Al Rinker, he stated that "I've Got The Girl" was recorded acoustically but he subsequently found that it was an electric recording.

Gary went on to talk about Bing's entry into Hollywood and lamented how he was now overlooked by film historians nowadays despite him being one of the top movie stars of all time. He also ridiculed the impression put about that Bing was lazy, saying that it was absolute nonsense and illustrating why this was so.

Why did Bing's image decline? Gary suggested that the very qualities that made Crosby indispensable in the 1930s and 40s - the independent relaxed imperturbable optimist - were no longer appropriate in the mid to late 1950s with the swinging Sinatra, rock 'n' roll and the nuclear age emerging. Bing's almost grandfatherly and remote persona was no longer relevant to the modern generation and Bing himself had recognised this

It seems that Bing was working on another autobiography before he died and had written about 25 pages which Gary had been shown. In this Bing said that "Well Did You Evah" was his favourite scene in movies. Gary enthused about Bing's performance in *High Society* and in particular his duet with Frank Sinatra.

In introducing a clip from the Hollywood Palace show of May 21, 1966, Gary praised the BBC for the help they have given him with videotapes but lamented that the TV networks in the USA had not aided him in any way. The clip featured the marvellous duet between Bing and Johnny Mercer and was probably new to many in the audience.

Gary then took questions and was soon asked when volume two of his book would be out. Gary responded "Next question" producing laughter before saying that realistically it was probably still two years away. If someone would give him a grant so that he need not work as a journalist, he could probably finish it off in a year but as it is, he works at it when he can. He is 90% done with the research.

If you buy only a few tapes from the Hofstra conference, this is certainly one to be considered. Gary spoke fluently and easily with few notes and I found it totally absorbing.

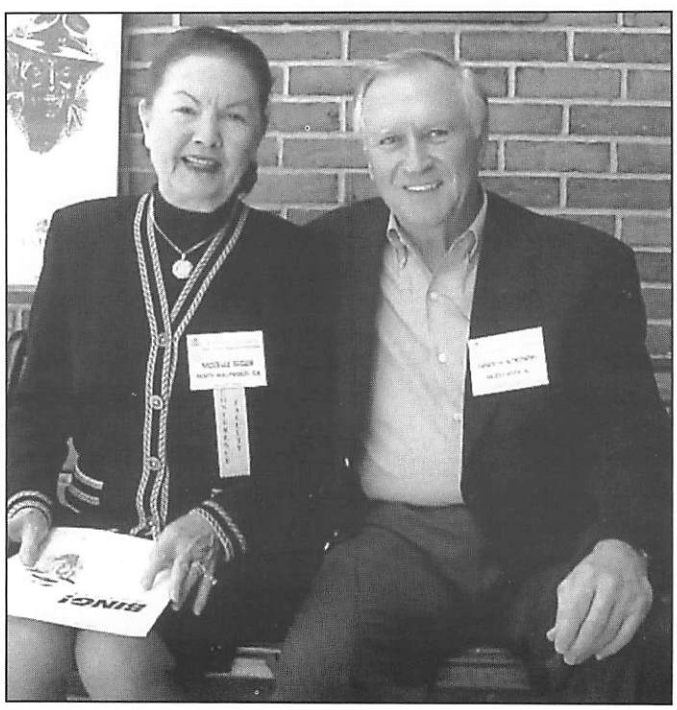
Plenary Session: Remembering Bing Crosby

A large panel was in place for this session with Barry Dougherty (from New York Friars Club) in the chair and Steven Crosby, Jean Halliburton, Gabriel Ferrer, George O'Reilly, Mozelle Seger, Buddy Bregman, Bob DeFlores, Howard Crosby (Bing's nephew and the son of Ted Crosby) and Gord Atkinson alongside him.

I admired Steven Crosby's courage as he stood to talk about his father Gary Crosby. Steven was the son of Gary's wife Barbara and was then adopted by Gary. If you look at Gary's book *Going My Own Way*, pages 286-289 talk about Steven and he clearly meant a lot to Gary. Steven acknowledged that his father's book had caused a lot of fuss but he explained that Gary had his own demons and that writing it was a cathartic experience for him. Steven spoke warmly about his grandfather and said that his favourite Bing song was "Do You Hear What I Hear" and his favourite films were *Stagecoach* and *Dr. Cook's Garden*. Incidentally, Steven (aged 47) is a very successful businessman with a high-powered job. Apparently Gary Crosby was always amazed at how well Steven had turned out bearing in mind Gary's own problems.

Gabriel Ferrer spoke of his childhood involvement with Bing and his family. He would visit them in Baja California and was always in trouble. He laughingly described Mary Frances as a demon child and he recounted several happy stories about his interaction with the Crosby children.

Mozelle Seger was the next to take the lectern and her talk was similar to the one she delivered at our Leeds meeting in 2001. One statistic amazed me - in 1951 the Crosby office sent out 57,000 photos of Bing and 30,000 letters! Also she mentioned that Bing's Rising River ranch was bought by Clint Eastwood who may still have it. Mozelle talked about the disputed date of Bing's birth and said that this had been resolved in 1968 when claiming his social security benefits. The Crosby office had obtained his baptismal certificate to put the matter beyond doubt once and for all.



Mozelle Seger takes a breather with Ernest Sutkowski

Howard Crosby (aged 50) joined the debate. He is the son of Ted Crosby and stands well over six feet. A successful businessman with a charming and lively

personality, I had several chats with him during the conference and he spoke very warmly about "Uncle Bing". I challenged him privately for details about the rift between Bing and his father which lasted for 20 years until 1963 and he promised to write an article about this for the magazine and as you will read elsewhere he has duly delivered on his promise. Howard is a scratch golfer and he told the audience that Bing had invited him to the Pebble Beach Pro-Am four times and that he golfed with Bing on many occasions. He mentioned how as a 16 year old, Bing took him to see the Pittsburgh Pirates play and arranged for him to suit up with the Pirates, take part in the batting practice and then sit in the dugout for the whole of the game. It was at this point that Howard realised that "Uncle Bing" was somebody important!

The next speaker was Jean Halliburton and at first her name didn't mean anything to me but she was the wife of Doctor Arnold Stevens, Bing and Dixie's doctor (see pages 137-139 of *Call Me Lucky*). She described her many visits to the Elko ranch and told stories linked to this. She also talked about Bing's fetish for being on time. One night, she had arranged a dinner party for 7 p.m. but expected all of the guests to arrive somewhat later. Whilst still in the early stages of preparing for the dinner party, she was alarmed to see a car pull up outside at 6:55 p.m. No one emerged until 7:00 p.m. precisely when Bing got out and rang the bell!

George O'Reilly also touched on Bing's obsession with punctuality and he told an amusing story about Bing the businessman. Apparently Bing was interested in having the Irish company Waterford Crystal provide the trophies for the Pebble Beach Pro-Am. At the factory, three trophies were shown to Bing as the company felt that the first three golfers should receive a prize in this form. As the rather hefty prices were outlined to Bing, he said that perhaps he would only present just one prize, and that would be to the winner. The company representative then told Bing that the company wished to donate the prizes and Bing quickly responded "You guys are right, it would be best to give three prizes."

Gord Atkinson talked about phone calls from Bing and how he was never sure whether it was really Bing or Gord's friend, Rich Little, impersonating him. On one occasion, Gord had been certain that it was Rich and Bing queried what was wrong with Gord as his attitude was different. Gord then realised that he was talking to Bing and quickly explained his problem.

With further contributions from Buddy Bregman and Bob DeFlores, the period allotted to the panel rapidly ran out.

Friday was the day of the banquet and with a requirement for business attire, it was time for some of us to revert to the hotel to change before returning to the John Cranford Adams Playhouse on the South campus.

Pre-Banquet Events: Surprise Video Presentation

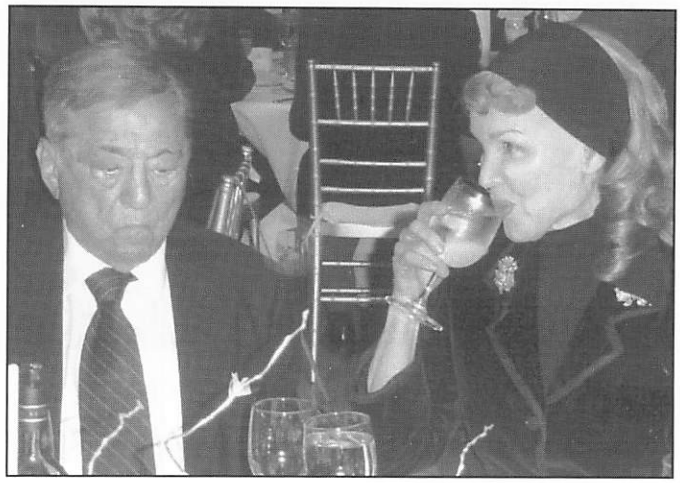
George O'Reilly had put together a very nice video of extracts from Bing's films and as Greg Van Beek has already reported, the audience was captivated by this. I suppose we have almost become accustomed to presentations such as this at our Leeds meeting but the video was well put together and was rapturously received by the large audience. George was a little disappointed by a slight loss of quality caused by the projector running too hot but I don't think most of those present noticed.

Special address: "My Last Years With Bing"

This was Kathryn Crosby's spot and she came on to the stage to read extracts from her new book "My Last Years With Bing". This is a difficult thing to do to a large audience but Kathryn managed well despite becoming tearful on occasion. She then introduced Nick Perito who was to accompany her at the piano. Kathryn started off with "Pennies From Heaven" and we needed little encouragement to sing along with her, just as many of us had done with Bing at the Uris and the Palladium. She followed this with an emotional "Moonlight Becomes You" and "The Second Time Around" before springing a surprise on Nick Perito. He had been telling Kathryn about an impromptu jam session in Russia when he had drunk too much vodka and Kathryn asked him to repeat this session for those assembled, without the aid of alcohol on this occasion. Nick took up the challenge and demonstrated his piano expertise to the full before finishing with an excellent Harry Warren medley, also unrehearsed. He deservedly won a tremendous ovation.

Gala Banquet

As we walked through to the banquet, we were all presented with a special Bing CD "Bing Crosby: the Voice of the Century" which had been produced by George O'Reilly and this was much appreciated by all present.



Robert Merrill and Kathryn Crosby at the banquet

Noted opera singer Robert Merrill (now aged 89) gave us a rousing "America, The Beautiful" as everyone rose to sing along with him. The enjoyable meal was followed by introductions of key personalities by hardworking Ruth Prigozy. Freddie Roman took over as Master of Ceremonies and told some very funny stories. Errol Dante sang "O Sole Mio", Robert Merrill, Steven Crosby and Joe Franklin (76) said a few words and Joe Bushkin played some exciting jazz piano as he sang his composition "Hot Time In The Town Of Berlin" which

was of course a huge hit for Bing. Then it was the turn of Margaret Whiting to entertain us with a number of songs accompanied by Tex Arnold on the piano. Margaret talked/sang through many of her old favourites such as "Day In, Day Out", "Nice Work If You Can Get It", "It Might As Well Be Spring" and "You Turned The Tables On Me" adding anecdotes along the way. She finished in a duet of "White Christmas" with Kathryn Crosby and we all joined in, needless to say.

It had been quite a day and quite an evening!

Margaret Whiting turns back the years.

Panel IX-B Fans Speak of Bing

Saturday started bright and early with this most enjoyable panel at 8:30 a.m. The shuttle from the hotel failed to turn up on time so Wig and I had to leap into a taxi to make it to the University on time. Wig chaired this panel excellently keeping to the times allotted and linking everything together in an amusing and fluent manner.

First Ron Field from Australia talked entertainingly about his meetings with Bing over the years and he was followed by Sister Mary Francis Moore who had entered a convent at the age of 30. Already a Crosby fan, she found that the Sisters were not allowed to watch TV after 8 p.m. at night which was awkward when she discovered that Bing was to appear on the Dean Martin TV show after 9 p.m. Sister Mary Francis told how she wrestled with the problem and she eventually overcame it by using a long pole to turn back the large clock high up on the wall so that it seemed as though it was before 8 p.m.! Sister Moore's talk was most amusing as she told of meeting Bing and Bob Hope - she did some *Road to Utopia* dialogue with Bob. Her first contact from Bing had been in an early fan letter which she had shown him years later and asked him if he had really signed it. As we know Bing's staff signed most of the basic replies and Bing avoided the problem of admitting this by simply saying "Well, let's refresh it for you now."

Greg Van Beek then delivered his paper about Bing's last day which was based on interviews conducted in Madrid by Francisco Prieto, who was also in the audience. Everyone present was riveted by Greg's words and you could have heard a pin drop such was the rapt attention. Greg told us that a special Bing Crosby Pro-Am was held at La Moraleja course in Madrid in November.

Wig then brought me in as a "discussant" and I talked briefly about the International Crosby Circle. This drew Gary Giddins to his feet from the audience and he gave a tremendous plug for the magazine saying that it must be the bargain of the century and that he read it from cover to cover. It seemed that about one third of the audience did not belong to any Crosby clubs and it is very pleasing to note that some of them have decided to join us after this session. Wig gave details of the Jonzo CDs and of the ICC calendar as a further enticement to those outside the loop. An important message put over by Wig was that the ICC existed to continue Bing's legacy and this will of course become more important as the years pass by.

Panel XI-B Bing and Jazz

Chaired by Buddy Bregman and built around a paper from Arnold J. Smith, Adjunct Professor of Jazz History at New Jersey City University, this session confirmed Bing's ability as a jazz singer not only in his early years but throughout his life. Professor Smith outlined Bing's jazz background and played excerpts from "I'm Coming Virginia", "Some of These Days", "Your Socks Don't Match", "Personality", "Ol' Man River" (1955 version), and "I've Got Five Dollars". Buddy Bregman talked about this final excerpt saying that Ella Fitzgerald had told him that it was a better arrangement than she had been given on the "Rodgers & Hart Songbook" album she had made earlier with Buddy. Mr. Bregman was very impressed by the way Bing floated over the beat.

The discussants at this panel were Gary Giddins, Will Friedwald and Bill Milkowski (the jazz critic). Gary illustrated how Bing retained his jazz beat throughout his life by showing a clip from the Hollywood Palace show of March 26, 1966 when Bing sang "When The Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob Bobbin' Along". Mr. Milkowski stated that Bing was always a swinger, being "inherently, intuitively syncopated" and "Bing was hip". He concluded "Crosby was a quintessential jazz singer."

Will Friedwald stepped up to say that he had loved the "Bing Sings While Bregman Swings" album from an

early age. In fact he had broken down and cried the first time he had heard "The Song Is You". Will said that Bing had only done the albums he had wanted to do after his Decca contract ended. He seemed to select themes such as jazz or travel or both. The "Bing With A Beat" LP was also highlighted by Will as an outstanding album.

One of the questions from the floor was about the "Bing 'N' Basie" record and Gary Giddins felt that it was not as good as it should have been as the producer got in the way by putting together stock arrangements of 60s type songs. Gary felt that neither Bing or Bill Basie were men likely to rock the boat and they would just have gone along with the producer.

Plenary Session: Interview with Nick Perito

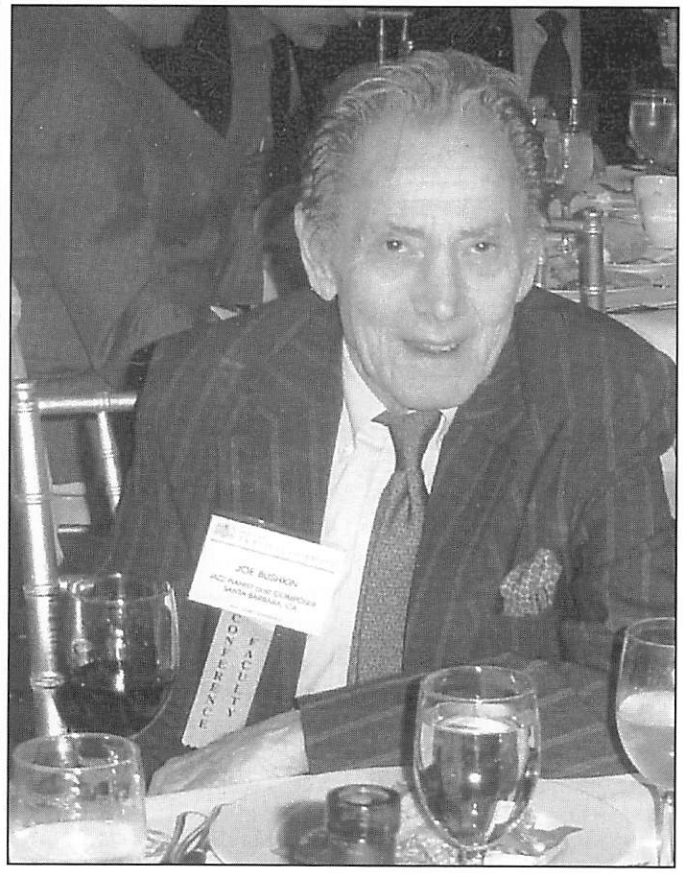
This interview was conducted by Greg Van Beek, and Nick Perito responded fluently to his perceptive questions. We have already mentioned how Nick came to work with Bing and Nick illustrated this with clips from Bing's 1971 Christmas Show and from the 1977 Pasadena concert. Nick is a most entertaining speaker and I was later interested to learn that he has written an autobiography which he hopes to have published in the near future.

Panel XII-B Bing and Louis

By now, even I was almost suffering from a surfeit of information about Bing and I missed the start of this session as I was locked in conversation with other delegates. I entered in time to see an amusing clip from the Hollywood Palace of September 25, 1965 when Bing duets with Satchmo and loses his shoes! Bing carries on singing and it was a real tribute to his professionalism that he managed to do so. A similar panel to the "Bing & Jazz" session was in place with the addition of Joe Bushkin and Phoebe Jacobs (from the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation). A radio extract of Louis, Bing and Ella Fitzgerald singing "Memphis Blues" (from the Chesterfield show of November 28, 1951) stunned the audience with its excellence. Joe Bushkin had made several funny comments throughout the conference about his recreational drug habit of many years ago and he topped these by saying "I got as high as you can possibly get and there was no reason to do it anymore." Another nice crack from Joe was "Bing made a lot of bad songwriters rich people."

Panel XIV-A Bing and the Girl Vocalists

The final panel of the conference was chaired by Buddy Bregman and unfortunately Richard Grudens was unable to be there to present his paper on "Bing and the Andrews Sisters" because of family problems. However Nicki Lee Barbour Foster (Peggy Lee's daughter) spoke well about her mother's work with Bing illustrating this with a clip from a TV show when they had sung "Too Neat to be a Beatnik". Nicki also introduced a memorable segment from one of Bing's television specials with Bing, Peggy and Frank Sinatra singing along with pianists Joe Bushkin, Paul Smith and George Shearing. The other presentation was from Gilbert L. Gigliotti, Assistant Professor of English at Central Connecticut State University and his paper was entitled

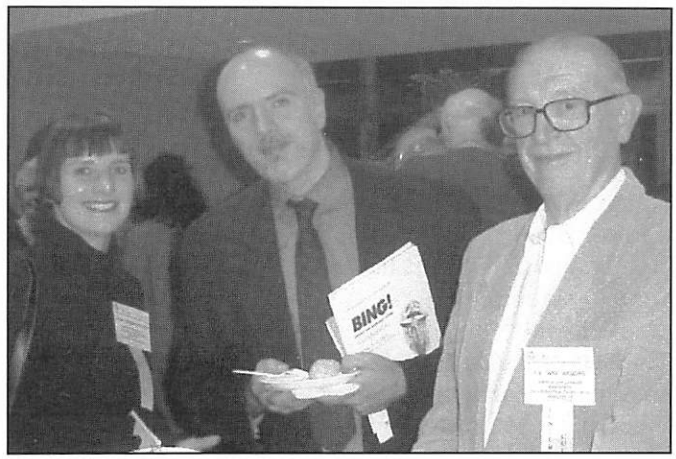


Joe Bushkin at the banquet

"Elvis Bows, Bing Just Nods". This was a nicely written in-depth review of the "Fancy Meeting You Here" album.

Closing Reception

It only remained for us all to gather for the final event of this remarkable conference. Ruth Prigozy thanked us all for our participation and Walter Raubicheck, Professor of English at Pace University, NY told us that there was an intention to publish all of the papers submitted. We all said our farewells to old and new friends before embarking on the adventure of finding a shuttle back to our hotels.



Wig, Will Friedwald and Dr. Elaine Anderson Phillips say their goodbyes.

These notes on the conference, long as they are, have only scraped the surface and are, of course, only my

personal opinions. So much happened and I have had to omit many sessions and many contributions from many people. The conference was built around key personalties such as Kathryn Crosby, Ken Barnes, Buddy Bregman, Joe Bushkin, Will Friedwald, Gary Giddins and Nick Perito, all of whom popped up all over the place to hold everything together. Kathryn made herself available to all and was happily signing autographs on all types of material including Carmela Amari's T-shirt! Some of the one-to-one chats I had with the celebrities present were fascinating. Those accustomed to attending slick business conferences were perhaps surprised by the more casual and relaxed academic approach evident here but it was the friendliness of the gathering which was the main feature for me. I met so many nice people and all this article can do really is give an impression of what went on. I apologise to all those I have not mentioned and to all who participated in sessions on which I have not commented.

It is possible to buy audio tapes for the sessions as described earlier by Greg although I was warned not to purchase the Bing & Louis tape (Panel XII-B) as it was recorded badly and the tape for Panel IIIB is faulty too as I've already mentioned. Hofstra are indeed proceeding to have the formal papers professionally published in the near future and we shall supply full details when we get them.

Malcolm Macfarlane

And for another overview of the conference, let's hand over to Ken Crossland who thought it was all...

Too Marvellous for Words?
A Personal Reflection on Hofstra from Ken Crossland

"Am I dreaming or am I awake?" Bing once mused aloud. There were times during the Hofstra Conference when I knew how he felt.

The programme was packed. Anything and everything to do with Bing. Sessions from dawn to dusk, some in parallel. When else would you haul yourself out of bed at the crack of dawn, grab a quick breakfast in a university refectory and then immerse yourself for 12 hours in anything and everything to do with Bing. And then do it again tomorrow and the day after?

Think about the people who were there, in the flesh. Did I ever expect to talk to the Skitch Henderson about Philco Radio Time? Was that really Joe Bushkin? Ken Barnes, Buddy Bregman, Nick Perito, shapers of some of the finest Crosby music and all standing here, chatting to me over coffee.

And how about the siblings? Linda Emmett, daughter of Irving Berlin apologised for not having been born early enough to be able to talk about "White Christmas". We forgave her. Ava Astaire maintained her father's diplomacy about his favourite dancing partner, but did let slip he thought his best partner wasn't Bing (surprise!). It was Rita Hayworth. Johnny Burke's daughter, Rory, came along and told us about the unpublished verses to "Swinging On A Star". Gabriel Ferrer, son of Rosie, remembered holidays in Baja California.

But fascinating as all of that was, there was one thing that made the whole experience almost surreal. And that was language and communication. Hofstra became Basin Street, a melting pot, at least for lovers of Bing. This was must have been what Cole Porter had in mind when he wrote the last eight bars of "Now Your Has Jazz". This was a "coast to the coast, east to the west" experience.

Consider this. One minute you're being invited to consider the dancing of Fred Astaire as a correlation to sexual foreplay and the next, Joe Bushkin is telling you about Louis and smoking pot. One professor muses on why Bing and Fred's pursuit of the girl in "Holiday Inn" has the "distance" of a husband rather than the seduction of true paramours, and then it's Gary Giddins, telling just how and why the authors of "The Hollow Man" were able to do such an unsubstantiated hatchet job on Bing.

I never realised that Bing was so legit in highbrow circles. "Crosby and Popular Modernity", "High and Low Culture in Fancy Meeting You Here" and at least a dozen more cerebral pieces, all of them meticulously researched, documented and delivered in a deathless, or was that deadly, prose. What would Durante have made of it?

Hofstra's great achievement was that the melting pot worked. Okay, the timings were tight, the scheduling chaotic. The audio visuals were poor, whilst the invention of the roving microphone seems to have by-passed that part of Long Island. Who cared? This was a positive cornucopia of cathartic Crosbyana.

Or put it another way. It was all much too much, and just too very very.....

Ken Crossland

Rosemary Clooney Tribute in LA

Kathryn Crosby, accompanied this time by daughter, Mary, also attended a star-studded tribute dinner to Rosemary Clooney at the Beverley Hilton Hotel on December 10. As part of a long presentation, the audience was treated to a video clip of Rosemary with Frank Sinatra and Bing from the 1957 Edsel Show, which served as a neat segue into comments by Kathryn and Mary. Kathryn met Rosemary when she met Bing and she said that Rosemary had actually had the love of three wonderful men in her life, Jose Ferrer, Dante DiPaolo and Bing. Kathryn said Bing and Rosemary shared something that probably no one will ever really be able to understand as their voices melded together seemingly magically. Mary Crosby grew up with Rosemary and her children, and then when they were on tour in 1976/77, she was treated to even more mentoring, friendship and love from Rosie.

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Ian Bell, 1-14-2 Horizon Tower, Tanjung Bunga Park, 11200 PENANG, Malaysia (e-mail: ianbell@tm.net.my)

WANTED

A cassette or CD copy of the 14-part BBC series on Bing, as broadcast in the early 1970s. Please email or write quoting price.

Arthur Blood, 597 Osmaston Rd., Derby DE24 8NE, UK

Arthur has produced a stamp (see below) especially for the centenary. Cost £3 for 20, including postage, to UK members. USA members can order from Wig Wiggins, price $5 for 20.

Also Arthur still has some of the coloured A4 sized (approx. 8" by 11.5") collage of the stamps he has produced in recent times and this has been produced as a limited issue of 250. It costs £3 for UK members. Sadly it has proved uneconomical to also offer it to USA and Canadian readers. The collage would look lovely in a frame. See page 16 of the Summer 2002 issue of BING for a photograph of the collage.

Brian Early, Godalming, Surrey, UK.

For Sale

My father's life time collection of his treasured Bing L.P.'s and cassettes. 112 single LP's plus 3 boxed sets with additional 17 albums. Also 46 cassettes and sixteen 78 rpms. All in good condition and require a good home where they can be appreciated. Would prefer to sell as complete collection. Best offer. In the UK, ring 01483-424235 or e-mail: mearly_2000@yahoo.co.uk

Footlight Records, 113 East 12th St., New York, NY 10003, USA (Tel: (212) 533-1572, Fax: (212) 673-1496, e-mail: footlight1@aol.com)

For your Bing needs on CD and Vinyl. See also www.footlight.com

Mrs. Edith Hooper, 54 Devonport Rd., Worthing, Sussex BN11 2SW, UK. (tel. 01903 233378)

Edith is faced with the formidable task of disposing of Gordon's huge collection of Crosbyana (LPs, CDs, tapes, posters and videos) and ideally is looking to sell the lot to one purchaser. She also wishes to sell a machine for copying video tapes from format to format (e.g. NTSC to PAL). Please contact Edith direct.

Paul Nehrich, 16 Sea Wall Ln., Bayville, NY 11709, USA (Tel: 1-516-628-1799, Fax: 1-516-628-9058)

WANTED

Bing - A Musical Autobiography - Japanese CD set MVCM-24003-6

The Record Centre, 45-46 Loveday St., Birmingham B4 6NR, UK (Tel: 0121-359-7399, e-mail: nic@recordcentre.fsnet.co.uk)

Ray Purslow and his team are real supporters of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs (and LPs) contact Ray.

Derek Sanders, Chertsey, Surrey, UK (Phone: 01932-569407)

"Are there any other Bing fans like me, that have recording equipment and like singing lovely songs, be they Bing songs or not. Please contact me on the above phone number."

Derek is a keen singer and would love to share his interest with other Crosby fans.

Select Circles, P. O. Box 302, Riverside, CT 06878, USA (Phone: 203-661-8421)

Select Circles have a large stock of Bing CDs. Write or call for information.

Bill Woodcock, 122 Station View, Starbeck, Harrogate HG2 7JB, UK (Phone: 01423-886061)

WANTED

Back issues of BING magazine, previous to issue #93
Back issues of BINGANG magazine, previous to Winter, 1995

BING BINDERS

Keep your magazines in mint condition by storing them in these specially made binders. They have blue covers with BING in gold on the spine and hold 10 copies, which allow them to either be inserted or removed, yet also open flat for easy reading. Costing £6.99 inc postage, £7.99 to Europe, £8.99 elsewhere, they are available from Ken Mason, 12 Wycomb Grove, Melton Mowbray, Leics. LE13 1EQ

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Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,
Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 236 Andrieux St., Sonoma, California 95476-6909, USA (tel. 707 996 0257 - e-mail Bingsfriends@yahoo.com - Web Site address http://home.earthlink.net/~erinssmile/

biographers. They were familiar only with Bing's performances which, however important to his fans, never played the major role in his life.

For once again it is the tale of the blind men and the elephant. Each has his little Bing that he knows, while the giant behind the scenes, who scorned to identify with his singing, acting, writing, golfing, hunting, fishing, traveling, horse racing, etc., remains lost in the mist.

I too may fail in my appointed task, but at least I've had ample occasion to acquaint myself with my subject.

As before, I have utilized the meticulous diaries which we both kept, and have had recourse to our voluminous correspondence, to supplement my own vivid memories, and those of scores of friends. With their help, I now invite the reader once again to share those by-gone days with Bing and me.

Some valid points from Kathryn. Bing was a private man who had his public "Bing Crosby" image and obviously we fans who know everything about his professional work can have little idea of his home life. Kathryn's book creates a picture of this for us and the style of the writing is very similar to her first book, especially for the years up to 1974. Kathryn's ironic humour will often bring a smile to the reader's face. I suspect Kathryn wrote most of this at the time of her first book and at times she portrays herself almost as a well-meaning, energetic "scatterbrain" who sorely tries Bing's patience with her "bull in a china shop" approach and her determination to be involved in summer stock productions about which Kathryn tells us:

> *"Bing, however, had once remarked that summer theater casts were composed of has-beens, might-have-beens, and never-could-have beens."*

In fact anyone who has met Kathryn will know that she is a highly intelligent and articulate lady but if she is saying that occasionally her judgement has been faulty then who are we to argue? Throughout a lifetime, everyone's judgement is faulty at times.

I must admit that to pledge $1 million of Bing's money to the Immaculate Heart College without agreeing it with him in advance seems a little reckless and I am sure it led to many tensions in the Crosby household. Most wealthy people don't have much in the way of ready cash as all their money is invested and often they rely on borrowed money for their liquidity. I gather that it took Bing a year or two to produce the funds. Kathryn also volunteered Bing's services to MC a fund-raising dinner for the College without asking him first and he refused to perform the chore. Kathryn had to take his place but she had her revenge by telling those assembled at the expensive dinner that Bing would pick up the tab for it! Again, this had not been agreed with him and it seems that Basil Grillo, Bing's business manager, nearly fell off his chair when he heard the announcement! The poor man was probably having to wrestle with plans to produce the $1 million already pledged and the tab for the dinner would have been the final straw. The tailpiece of the story is that in 1980, due to severe financial difficulties, Immaculate Heart College was forced to close its doors and the property was sold to the American Film Institute!

As Kathryn relates the various stories of her life with Bing up to 1974, the reader gains an impression of Bing tolerantly accepting most of Kathryn's projects with only the occasional bust-up between them. Bing walks off and leaves Kathryn alone in Mexico City without money and a passport after one disagreement. Generally however, there are many accounts of hunting and fishing trips in various parts of the world and Bing certainly seemed to be very accomplished in that area. He also liked roughing it under canvas which Kathryn certainly did not relish. Kathryn says of Bing on safari in Africa:

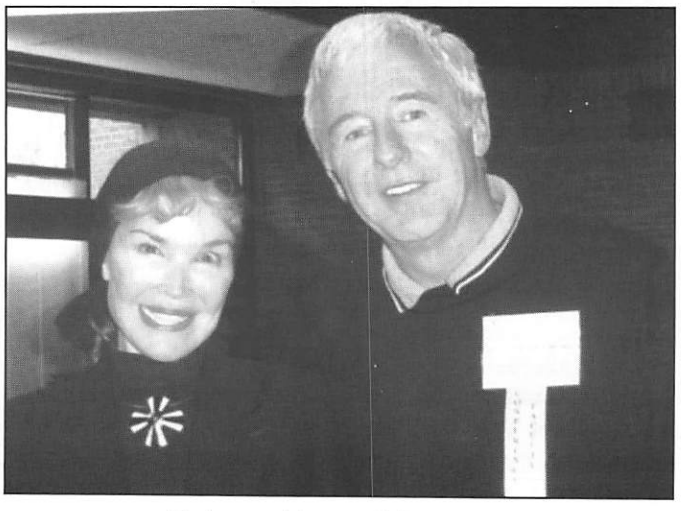
> *"This primitive provider [Bing] was a complete stranger to me, and I was beginning to realize that he was in his true environment. Ill at ease in the effete world of Hollywood, which had granted him such rewards as society could offer, he was at home in mankind's earliest habitat."*

Kathryn and Bing were introduced by their friends to the game of scrabble and this was something the couple enjoyed together, especially on long flights. Perhaps scrabble taught a useful word to Kathryn because on several occasions in the book she used the word "yclept." This was new to me and I had to hurry to my dictionary to discover that it was an obsolete word meaning "having the name of; called." A good word for a scrabble board, starting with a 'y'.

I won't spoil the book for you by giving too many details but I found it absorbing throughout. For instance, I liked this extract:

> *"Bing loved to buy houses, but he never felt comfortable as a rich man, because he couldn't stand the thought of enjoying things that others didn't have. He therefore tried to assuage his guilt by sharing his possessions. I, who had never had a farthing to my name, was happily prepared to enjoy them to the utmost, all by myself if necessary."*

Kathryn's prose is very readable and she tells of her own separate adventures and of tragic events such as the death of her mother following a car accident in a short matter-of-fact way. I thought I detected a slight change of style around 1974 which presumably is when the Kathryn of the present day starts to write. Bing is ageing, arthritic, becoming frail and suffering poor health. She has to look after him more. He falls asleep with a cigar in his mouth after dinner, he nearly dies in January 1974 and Kathryn is suddenly no longer a scatterbrain. Indeed she objects to the way she is to be portrayed at the Pasadena concert and Bing agrees to have the script changed.



Kathryn with your Editor at Hofstra.

We know from Mary Crosby's interviews that there was a serious rift in the family when she went to a school in Mexico in late 1973 after Kathryn had sanctioned it. Kathryn does not mention this nor does she discuss any other real tensions in the marriage which might have given rise to the scurrilous newspaper articles after Bing's death which suggested that the Crosby marriage had real problems and might have ended in divorce. And why should she? The book is not written for the tabloid newspapers but for the fans of Bing and Kathryn.

As Kathryn covers the year 1971, she describes the problems Bing was having with the children of his first marriage. There is a blistering account of the self-induced problems of Gary and his brothers which is spread over nearly four pages. Eventually Kathryn discusses the situation with Bing's friend, Dr. Sullivan, who incidentally pops up throughout the book, was clearly part of the Crosby family for many years and is still Kathryn's trustee to this day. Dr. Sullivan's opinion of the four boys from Bing's marriage to Dixie was that:

> *"a present-day clinician would probably conclude that they represent a form of infantile imperialism, extended into adulthood. They've always been able to gratify any whim immediately, and have never had to endure the slightest frustration. Understandably, they must consider themselves omnipotent. From what I hear, Dixie was a loving mother, but utterly permissive. Children are rather like horses, who test the limits of a rider's tolerance. In the case of those boys, there were no constraints. They reached out for the boundaries of reality, and found none."*

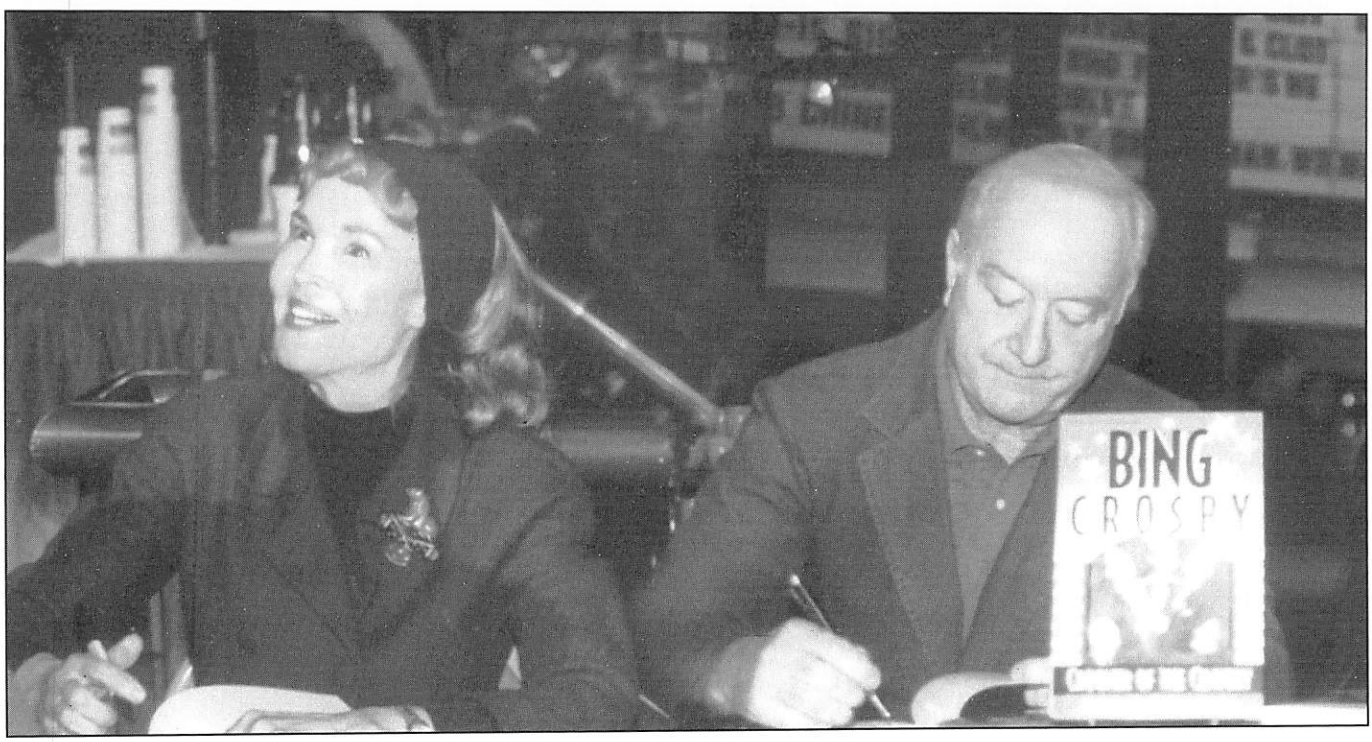
I am not qualified to discuss this matter, but I am not sure that Dr. Sullivan's answer accurately covers the situation. Could it be that the boys only cut loose when they were freed from Bing's rules and there was nobody else to put constraints on them? We need some experts to help us really.

Dr. Sullivan has another significant entry in Kathryn's book in August, 1977. Kathryn flies home to spend a few hours with Bing before he departs to the UK and the book continues:

> *When I arrived, he [Bing] was closeted with Dr. Sullivan. Upon news of my advent, he rushed out delightedly to welcome me.*
>
> *On the other hand, the normally imperturbable ex-marine [Dr. Sullivan] passed me by without a greeting, looking as if he'd just been confronted by a legion of ghosts.*
>
> *It was many years later that I learned that Bing had told him the following: "I feel fine now but I've had unmistakable signs that I'm going soon. Promise me to take care of Kathryn and the children."*
>
> *"But I'm just an academic, and anything but a financial wizard, as you well know.*
>
> *"Yes, but I trust you."*
>
> *"You can't die. Everyone here needs you, myself included."*
>
> *"Sorry, but this is one thing that I can't control. Will you promise?"*
>
> *"Of course, but I find this inconceivable. Please don't go."*
>
> *"I'll do my best, but I rather doubt that we'll meet again on this green planet. Good luck, Bill. You'll need it."*
>
> *And Bing had come out grinning, while Dr. Sullivan stumbled off without a word to his mountain hideaway.*

Whilst Bing was seeking help, who would have guessed that he would have opened up in that way to a friend? I suppose he was feeling very low at the time. One would have perhaps thought that he would have shared such concerns with his wife first. The book finishes on October 14, 1977 just after Dr. Sullivan tells Kathryn that Bing has died in Spain.

I challenged Kathryn about this premature ending when I was talking to her at Hofstra. I thought that she might have gone on to have covered the legal battle over Bing's estate, the "Hollow Man" and Gary Crosby books, the ending of the



Kathryn Crosby and Richard Grudens at their book signing at Hofstra.

Pebble Beach Golf Tournament, the auction of many of Bing's possessions, the suicide of Lindsay and Dennis, her own career and so on. She smiled and said "that's for the next book" but I think that she was probably joking.

However, this is a fascinating volume as it is and it forms an important part of our understanding of the man who was Harry Lillis Crosby.

Kathryn is promoting the book in various parts of the USA and for instance, she was very active in the Metropolitan area of New York City between February 8 and 16 at locations co-ordinated by Martin McQuade and Fred Romary. Kathryn was interviewed on Joe Franklin's radio show on WOR (AM710) on February 9 and I understand that she has also recently recorded her book on tape for subsequent issue.

Order the book from Barnes & Noble or your local bookshop. Barnes & Noble are advertising it on the Internet for $31.96 (a 20% discount) but postage has to be added to this. Any UK members who cannot obtain the book should contact me and I'll order it for them over the Internet. At present rates of exchange and including postage, we are looking at a cost of around £30.

Malcolm Macfarlane

2. Bing Crosby: Crooner of the Century

By Richard Grudens, Celebrity Profiles Publishing, New York, 2002. $19.95. ISBN 1-57579-248-6

It's a brave writer who publishes a biography of Bing so soon after Gary Giddins' "Pocketful Of Dreams". Richard Grudens deals with this by not seeking to compete with Giddins. His product - a compact, well-illustrated guide to Bing - is targeted at a different market.

The author might not thank me for saying so, but his book actually belongs in the guide books section of the library. Its essentially a kind of "Rough Guide to Bing Crosby". Its target market is the casual reader rather than the connoisseur. As such, it's a welcome addition to the Crosby bibliography. Grudens sources might be largely previous publications but his presentation makes it a much more useful than the dreadful rehash produced by Michael Freedland a few years ago.

Like any good guidebook, it's one that the reader can dip into at various points. Self-standing sections deal with a range of issues - Bing's homes, Bing's business interests, and extensively, the people who are associated with Bing. There are lots of lists - Bing's films, best songs, books about Bing and a section on "Bing's Clubs" where the ICC gets a prominent mention.

The most interesting part of the book is the first 100 pages where Grudens rattles through a biography of Bing. Gary Giddins has as yet only reached 1940, so the author has an opportunity to present some new material around Bing's last years, and indeed the brouhaha that followed "The Hollow Man" and Gary Crosby's book. I found the interview with Gary Crosby's wife and the interview with Phillip Crosby, interesting to read, even if I had seen some of it before. It whets the appetite for Giddins' coverage of these years.

It's a nicely presented book, with lots of photos and reproductions. If the Giddins tomes are not for you, this one might well be.

Ken Crossland

(USA & Canadian ICC members can obtain the book for the special price of $17 including postage via the Internet through www.richardgrudens.com or by phone through Edison & Kellogg at (631) 862-8555. Credit cards are accepted. Mainland UK members can order the book from Gazelle Book Services Ltd., Falcon House, 4 Queen St., Lancaster LA1 1RN (phone: 01524 68765) for £17.50 plus £2.95 postage. Credit cards accepted. European and members from all other countries should contact their local bookstore quoting the title and ISBN number of the book.

Richard Grudens has picked up a lot of plaudits since his book was published and here are a few:

PAT BOONE, "Richard, you did a good job. I thoroughly enjoyed the book and, like millions of other Americans, I am insatiable for any new tidbits about Der Bingle this long after he left the stage."
PATTY ANDREWS, "What a wonderful book - I love everything Richard Grudens writes. We were happy to have sung with Bing Crosby and for Richard to tell about it."
EDDY ARNOLD, "I really enjoyed this book, particularly of Richard's portrayal about Bing's very interesting early career efforts, and how he conquered obstacles all singer's face."
FRANKIE LAINE, "This latest creation about Bing is excellent. He was one of my mentors, you know."
GLORIA JEAN, Famous child singing star. "Bing's book is beautifully written, and the pictures are special. It was an honor to be a part of this great book about a great man, Bing Crosby."
ERVIN DRAKE, Composer, songwriter, "I love this book. After reading many bios of music people, I am thankful for a book like this which does not get into the nonsense of psychoanalyzing the subject but, instead, give the facts that account for an interesting career."
BIG BAND JUMP NEWSLETTER, Don Kennedy, Host "This is the best of Grudens' celebrity books. His style in all his books is like a star-shower with facts, stories and interview comments inserted at random, If you're a Crosby fan, it should be in your library."

Ken Crossland is currently working on his biography of Michael Holliday provisionally titled 'The Man Who Would Be Bing' and in the meantime he takes a look at a new book about Bing's most famous song.)

3. White Christmas - The Story Of An American Song

by Jody Rosen, Scribner, New York. ISBN: 0-743-21875-2, list price $24, but available for $16.80 at Amazon. In the UK, published by Fourth Estate, ISBN: 1841156310, list price £12.99 but available for £10.39 from Amazon. Hardcover only, paperback version expected October, 2003.

Every now and then, a book comes along that makes you take a fresh look at something you have taken for granted forever. I don't know about you but when that happens to me, I love it.

Jody Rosen's book on the story of Irving Berlin's - and Bing's - most famous song, does just that. And as such, it's a gem.

But we all know its history, don't we? Actually, we don't know as much as we think. When did Berlin first start work on the song? What was his original concept? Why was a song that hankered back to a Dickensian view of Christmas so much in tune with the America in the late 1930s? Rosen has all the answers.

But for me the real thundercrack is this. Did you realise

that millions of people who hear Bing's famous record as the backcloth to their annual Christmas shopping expeditions actually think they are listening to a carol - something that is on a par with "Silent Night" and written centuries ago? As someone who feels like he has always known that "White Christmas" was a Berlin ballad, that thought had never crossed my mind. It speaks volumes both for the song itself (which by the way has only 53 words in it) and for Bing's rendition too.

The book will do much for Bing's memory and reputation. It firmly rebukes those who would portray Bing as the lucky jockey aboard Berlin's thoroughbred. Not so. Berlin was insistent that the song needed Bing and Bing alone, quite simply because he thought it was the best song ever written and felt it needed the best singer to do it. And the rest as they say, is history.

It's a good December read. Add it to your 2003 Christmas list but request early delivery!

Ken Crossland

(Editor: I was amazed at the blanket coverage of the "White Christmas" book and Bing too naturally received much favourable comment. Many newspapers in the USA, UK and Australia carried enthusiastic reviews of the book and here's an excerpt from the Sydney Morning Herald of December 28.)

"Bing Crosby's original recording of Irving Berlin's 'White Christmas' features on a new Australian album marketed this holiday season to a teenage audience. The album has gone gold, selling more than 35,000 copies in the weeks before Christmas. And in the United States, poised on the brink of a new war, the wartime song that speaks of peace is more popular than ever. To mark its 60th birthday, Scribner has published *White Christmas: The Story of an American Song*, a cultural history of the song that author, Jody Rosen, calls "the darkest, bluest tune ever to masquerade as a Christmas carol. We cringe at its mawkishness, but our embarrassment should arise from the shock of self recognition ... the hopeless lust for yesteryear. It is beautiful and grotesque, tacky and transcendent."

Since 'White Christmas' premiered in the movie *Holiday Inn* in 1942, more than 220 artists have recorded the ballad, from Doris Day to the German heavy metal band Helloween, from the Chipmunks to the Beach Boys, from Neil Diamond to Tiny Tim, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Placido Domingo, Peggy Lee, the Flaming Lips, Backstreet Boys and Destiny's Child.

This year, it is reborn in the compilation album 'So Fresh: Christmas Past and Present'. The double CD album features new songs from artists in the Sony, Universal Records and BMG stables, and seasonal goodies from the distant past by artists such as Ringo Starr, Doris Day, the Jackson Five and Crosby - all unknown names to the teenage buyers. Sony's marketing manager, Sarah Reardon, said the album had sold "very well", going "gold plus" in the two weeks before Christmas."

(Editor: Another 35,000 copies of 'White Christmas' sold! Elton John eat your heart out.)

Irish-American Heritage Month, 2003

An extract from a Proclamation By the President of the United States of America

. . . Throughout our history, America has welcomed millions of Irish immigrants to its shores. These proud people arrived seeking a better life for themselves, their families, and future generations. Many courageous individuals came during the terrible years of Ireland's Great Famine in the middle of the 19th century, and their road to prosperity was not easy. Many faced significant obstacles, including discrimination and poverty. Despite these challenges, Irish Americans have risen to success in every sector of our society. . .

In all areas of American life, Irish Americans have made significant and enduring contributions to our great country. America is a better Nation because of the efforts of Irish Americans like Henry Ford, who spurred innovation; **Bing Crosby**, who entertained countless people around the world; and activist Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, who worked for critical and compassionate social reform. These individuals are just a few of the many Irish Americans who helped to transform our national identity and whose accomplishments reflect the determination, joy, and hope of the Irish. The faith, perseverance, and spirit of the Irish have helped to strengthen our families, our communities, our ideals, and our national character.

Today, approximately one in four Americans can trace their ancestry in part to Ireland's green shores, and we are proud of and grateful for the many Irish Americans who continue to enrich our country.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2003 as Irish-American Heritage Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month by learning about and commemorating the contributions of Irish Americans to our Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

GEORGE W. BUSH

(Editor: How remarkable to see Bing remembered in this way. Well done, Mr. Bush!)

Keith Parkinson's Celluloid Crosby

Ken Merry's letter in the last issue of **BING** referred to Billy Wilder's ungracious attitude towards the commercial failure of *The Emperor Waltz*. It was out of character for Wilder not to recognise that his own contribution as writer/director had a lot to answer for. Nor did he overstate his input to films, as we shall see. Malcolm's obituary of Billy Wilder in issue 131 of **BING** made mention of Wilder's contribution to *Rhythm on the River* when Wilder received credit as co-author (with Jacques Thery) of the story on which the film was based. Wilder's last extended interview before his death found him well able to cast his mind back over fifty years and recall details surrounding his involvement with *Rhythm on the River*. He told Cameron Crowe:

> *"That was a screenplay, or rather a screen story treatment, that I wrote in Berlin before I came to America. It was a good story, and I sold it, but then they used just one little detail. And that was it. The third act was - which they did not use - about a great writer, an Irving Berlin type, who comes up to see them (the Crosby and Mary Martin characters). Destitute, the two of them, husband and wife, lyrics and music. And Berlin just takes off his coat and sits down, and he becomes the ghost-writer for the two. That was the story."*

In fact, the film's original title was "Ghost Music".

Bing was under the impression that his first meeting with leading lady Mary Martin occurred on the set of *Rhythm on the River*. Mary Martin reminded him that in 1938, when she was singing for $200 a week at Hollywood's Casanova night-club, Bing would frequently request the female vocalist to sing "Shoe Shine Boy". She was that vocalist. The result of their "re-union" when *Rhythm on the River* started shooting in May, 1940, was that she was then selected to become a regular guest on Bing's "Kraft Music Hall" broadcasts. She soon became impressed with his ability to ad-lib and cover up when he dropped his script or lost his place during those broadcasts. As far as film making was concerned, in her autobiography she wrote: "Making movies with Bing almost made Hollywood worthwhile. He was the most relaxed, comfortable, comforting man."

Mary Martin's association with Bing might have been re-born in 1940 but *Rhythm on the River* is peppered with names of performers who were part of the Crosby story without being directly involved in the motion picture industry. John Scott Trotter played bandleader John Scott Trotter and Ken Carpenter played announcer Teddy Gardner. Both had been integral parts of Crosby's *Kraft Music Hall* show for the last few years. JST was also credited with orchestrating the songs used in the film. For the film, ex-Rhythm Boy Harry Barris was given a saxophone to hold even if he couldn't play it. He can be seen accompanying Mary Martin when she sings "Ain't it a Shame About Mame". It was a bit part in the film but it provided Barris with a few dollars spending money. Wingy Manone's band was prominent in the film. Bing had a soft spot for Wingy and used him on his radio show in later years. When Manone's autobiography was published in 1948 it was Bing who provided the foreward. Bing's affection for the trumpeter can be seen from the foreward's closing sentence:

"Believe me, folks, after you've read "Trumpet on the Wing" you'll agree that if anybody has a right to blow his own horn, it's my boy, Wingy Manone."

Mary and Bing demonstrate a song.

Bing's regular screensong writers of the time - Johnny Burke and James V. Monaco - came up with half a dozen songs which stand up well out of context. The film's title song provided one of the best vocal set pieces ever committed to film by Bing when, in a sequence set in a pawn shop, "Rhythm on the River" is the subject of an impromptu jam session. "Only Forever" was the big love ballad and "That's for Me" the uptempo song that audiences hummed and whistled as they left the cinema.

Fred Reynolds' book on Bing's recordings of the period precisely describes "When the Moon Comes Over Madison Square" when he writes "the tune is very apposite and the lyrics are well crafted". Which leaves "What Would Shakespeare Have Said" which Bing sings to accompaniment from Oscar Levant for the film's opening number and "Beware" which was cut from the film before its release. Although neither title was recorded for release by Bing they can be found on the Jasmine CD release "Going Hollywood Volume 3". James V. Monaco, who wrote the tunes for Johnny Burke's lyrics, is profiled in the following "A-Z" of Bing's films.

The film's press preview was set up to ensure maximum publicity. Reporters were transported by train to Del Mar, California, and saw a few races being run before the film was projected onto a giant movie screen. The hospitality worked and full newspaper and magazine coverage proved that reporters could be bought, even if there was a degree of subtlety in disguising a six hour junket as a full day's hard work. In addition to the free advertising provided by written reports submitted by a couple of hundred critics and commentators, NBC laid on live radio coverage from Del Mar race track. The full John Scott Trotter orchestra journeyed to Del Mar to accompany Bing and Mary Martin on songs from the film. Bing also sang the song which preceded every Del Mar race meeting: "Where the Turf Meets the Surf". Listeners were given a first opportunity to hear the four main songs from the film which had been recorded for Decca the previous month. Bing's regular weekly appearances on the *Kraft Music Hall* had ended for a summer break earlier in August so this was a valuable radio plug for the start of the Del Mar race season, the film and the recordings. Bing was part owner of Del Mar and the track's financial performance had been disappointing in recent years.

The next boost of publicity for *Rhythm on the River* came just one week later. The premiere took place at the New York Paramount Theatre. The accompanying stage show featured the Count Basie Orchestra. The Basie Orchestra vocalists were Jimmy Rushing and Helen Hume who, on the face of it, were far removed from the style of singers associated with the Crosby type of material and its interpretation. The reviews following the Del Mar preview and the New York premiere were uniformly favourable. The two here were typical of the critical reaction from the east and west coast:

> "One of the most likeable musical pictures of the season." *New York Times*
>
> "A crackerjack good film." *Hollywood Citizen News*

Thirty years on, *Rhythm on the River* became the inspiration for one of the biggest easy listening hits of the 1970s. Richard Carpenter had a lifelong love of "standard" songs by quality vocalists like Bing and Perry Como. In 1950, the year his sister Karen was born, Richard's father bought him a childrens' record player endorsed with Bing's name and modelled in the shape of a juke box. The Crosby link was made and in 1971 Richard settled down to watch *Rhythm on the River* on late night television. The film's plot of a songwriter who was unable to compose when his sweetheart deserts him inspired him to write the two lines

I'll sing goodbye to love

No one ever cared if I should live or die

Carpenter was not a lyric writer so he shared his idea with his frequent collaborator John Bettis. Bettis wrote the rest of the words to Carpenter's melody and with Karen's haunting vocal "Goodbye to Love" became a massive hit.

And a further thirty years on does the film stand up? Yes, for several reasons. As noted earlier, the musical score is strong. Basil Rathbone was third billed and played Oliver Courtney, a composer suffering from songwriter's block who has to use the Bing character as his ghost writer. Rathbone was at his box-office peak. He had recently starred as Sherlock Holmes in a couple of films and was about to embark on a further fourteen as the consulting detective. *Rhythm on the River* provides an opportunity to observed him as the unscrupulous Oliver Courtney rather than inscrutable Sherlock Holmes. Then there is Oscar Levant, playing Bing's cynical assistant. The sad faced wit may not have been his usual scene stealing self but he is perfect casting as Starbuck. If *Rhythm on the River* is scheduled for television screening at an inconvenient off-peak time, it's worthwhile setting the video recorder or better still buy the DVD when it comes out shortly.

Keith Parkinson

ANDY CAPP
THE NERVE OF HER!
LASS
SHE CALLED ME GRANDAD — OLD FOGEY!
EVEN IF SHE CHANGES HER MIND, SHE'S NOT GETTING TO HEAR MY BING CROSBY RECORDS NOW!

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

MISSISSIPPI MUD Song. The first chance most people had of seeing Bing sing on screen was when he appeared in *King of Jazz* (1930) with the Rhythm Boys. The trio sang this Harry Barris - James Cavanaugh composition and audiences marvelled at the singers' healthy complexions made possible by the novel two colour Technicolor process. Bing enjoyed singing this one. He recorded it three times before 1930, sang it when the Rhythm Boys were briefly re-united on radio in 1943 and covered it with Buddy Cole's accompaniment in 1954 for his musical autobiography set.

MISTER BOOZE Song. In *Robin and the 7 Hoods* (1964) the police raid a club expecting to find gaming in progress. Instead they find themselves attending a revivalist meeting. Bing is leading the congregation with a song pointing out the evils of drink. Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis jr all testify to the damaging effect of alcohol but it is Bing's musical preaching which gives credence to this Sammy Cahn-James Van Heusen composition.

MISTO CRISTOFO COLUMBO Song. One of two catchy fun songs from *Here Comes the Groom* (1951), the other one being "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening". It is sung in a scene set onboard an aeroplane with Bing serenading fellow passengers. Dorothy Lamour, Cass Daley, Phil Harris and Louis Armstrong join in. It's almost as though Bing selected his personal friends to join him on this one. Ray Evans and Jay Livingston were responsible for setting the record straight by letting us know that Columbus "proved to all the squares that the world was round".

MITCHELL, GRANT (1874-1957) Actor. He played the father of Marjorie Reynolds in *Dixie* (1943) and will be remembered for banning Bing from seeing his daughter because he believes that it was Bing's pipe which caused the fire that burned down the family home. He then relents a little by agreeing that Bing can marry his daughter if Bing becomes successful as an entertainer during the following six months. Students of plots such as this will know how the film ends after seeing the first reel. Mitchell had been in films since the beginning of the 1930s and was often typecast as a prim and proper pillar of the community. He retired from the screen in 1948.

MOHR, HAL (1894-1974) Director of photography. On *King of Jazz* (1930), Mohr was assisted by Jerome Ash and Ray Rennahan as photographer. He was team leader as far as camera work on that film was concerned, having been a director of photography for ten years. During that time he had been an innovator in the early years of moving pictures. He had managed a newsreel company and in 1929 he introduced crane shots to the film industry. He was one of the first to use dolly and boom shots, which allowed for far greater fluidity of movement when it came to an assignment like the prestigious *King of Jazz*. Recognition by his peers resulted in an Oscar for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935) and a shared Oscar for *Phantom of the Opera* (1943). He was still working well into his seventies, mainly on television and he was one of only four cinematographers to have a star on the famous "Hollywood Walk of Fame".

MON COEUR EST UN VIOLON Song. Bing did not sing this Richepin/Laparcerie composition in *Little Boy Lost* (1953). That honour went to Nicole Maurey. But its strong melody must have appealed to Bing because he recorded the song twice around the time that *Little Boy Lost* was being made. On 12th March, 1953 he recorded an English version - "Violets and Violins" with lyrics provided by Jack Lawrence. John Scott Trotter accompanied Bing on that Los Angeles recording session. Then he sang it in French under its original title for that marathon session in Paris on 16th May, 1953 with Paul Durand et son Grand Orchestre. The outcome of that day's work was the album "Le Bing". In the British Isles, the song is associated with comedian Ken Dodd. Doddy made it a number one hit in the 1960s under the title "Love is Like a Violin" and thereafter adopted it as his signature tune.

MONACO, JAMES V. (1885-1945) Songwriter. Monaco's career in music started when he was a night-club pianist. He provided melodies for seven Crosby pictures. In fact, his screen assignments from 1938 to 1940 were exclusively for Bing films. During that productive three years it was the reliable Johnny Burke's tailor made lyrics to Monaco's tunes which resulted in a string of quintessential Crosby recordings. Here are the films and their songs:

1. *Doctor Rhythm* (1938): "My Heart is Taking Lessons", "On the Sentimental Side" and "This is my Night to Dream"
2. *Sing You Sinners* (1938): "I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams", "Don't Let That Moon Get Away" and "Laugh and Call it Love"
3. *East Side of Heaven* (1939): "Sing a Song of Sunbeams", "Hang Your Heart on a Hickory Limb", "That Sly Old Gentleman" and "East Side of Heaven"
4. *The Star Maker* (1939): "A Man and His Dream", "Go Fly a Kite", "An Apple for the Teacher" and "Still the Bluebird Sings"
5. *Road to Singapore* (1940): "Sweet Potato Piper", "Too Romantic" and "An Apple for the Teacher"
6. *If I Had My Way* (1940): "Meet the Sun Halfway", "I Haven't Time to be a Millionaire", "Pessimistic Character" and "April Played the Fiddle"
7. *Rhythm on the River* (1940): "Only Forever", "When the Moon Comes Over Madison Square", "Rhythm on the River", "That's For Me" and "What Would Shakespeare Have Said"

Burke and Monaco wrote to order and they also came up with "The Little White Pill on the Little Green Hill" for Bing's golfing short *Swing With Bing* filmed in January, 1940. After the Burke-Monaco partnership dissolved, Monaco worked on musicals for 20th Century-Fox, providing songs for Fox contract artistes like Betty Grable and Dick Haymes. He was still employed by that studio when he died at the age of sixty.

MONTAND, YVES (1921-1991) French actor-singer. Montand was an accomplished singer when he costarred with Marilyn Monroe in *Let's Make Love* (1960). Even so, he was assigned Bing as a singing tutor in that film. "Incurably Romantic" was thus given a touch of the Crosbys when Bing coached him before recommending that Montand took up dancing. His career as an entertainer began in the early 1940s when Edith Piaf discovered him singing at the Moulin Rouge. She felt he had acting potential and he made his screen

debut in one of her films in 1946. His biggest success was in *The Wages of Fear* (1953). *Let's Make Love* marked his Hollywood debut. He became a minor international star and was more at home making political thrillers than Hollywood musical misfires like *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (1970). He was known as a ladies man and his off screen performances often made news. There is an item of trivia to confirm this: his body was exhumed six years after his death in order to settle a paternity suit.

MOON AND THE WILLOW TREE, THE Song. Johnny Burke and Victor Schertzinger wrote this song for Dorothy Lamour to sing in *Road to Singapore* (1940). It was a strong ballad and Decca saw the merit in arranging for Bing to record it to coincide with the film's release.

MOON GOT IN MY EYES, THE Song. Johnny Burke collaborated with Arthur Johnston on this romantic ballad featured in *Double or Nothing* (1937). Its presentation in the film is unusual in that Bing's musical accompaniment is provided by a female vocal orchestra imitating the sound of various instruments.

MOONBURN Song. Bing is on the run on board ship in *Anything Goes* (1936). In one sequence he disguises himself as a sailor and sings this Edward Heyman-Hoagy Carmichael composition. It was the first Hoagy Carmichael melody to be written specifically for a film. Bing's Decca recording is held in high regard by jazz buffs because it features piano accompaniment by Joe Sullivan.

MOONLIGHT BECOMES YOU Song. The most famous of all Bing's moon songs, partly because it was featured in two box office hits from his peak Hollywood period. Its initial airing was in *Road to Morocco* (1942) when Bing used it to woo Dorothy Lamour in a scene set in a palace garden. Later in the same film it is used for comic effect when Hope and Crosby see a mirage of Lamour and the three of them sing the song with voices interchanged. Two years on, it was the only Burke-Van Heusen song to be placed in *Here Come the Waves.* That film acknowledged that it was not a new composition by having Betty Hutton play a 78 recording on her phonograph.

MOONSTRUCK Song. This was Bing's first "moon" song to make it in a movie. Sam Coslow and Arthur Johnston composed it for *College Humor* (1933). Bing sings it to Mary Carlisle twice during the course of the film. The first time is at a dance and the reprise comes when Mary Carlisle thinks Bing - playing a professor - is leaving her college.

MOORE, IDA (1882-1964) Character actress who was usually cast as someone's kindly old mum by the time she was in her sixties. She made an impact in *Mr. Music* when she was Nancy Olsen's Aunt Amy and took on the responsibility of chaperone when Nancy visited Bing's apartment. She gained a small part in *The Country Girl* four years later but by then her career was winding down and she only appeared in a couple more Hollywood films before her retirement from the screen.

MOORE, MATT (1888-1960) Actor. Matt Moore had two older brothers in films - Owen and Tom. Before he reached the age of thirty he was a romantic lead in silents and early talkies. By the age of forty he was out of favour and his screen future lay in supporting roles. Which is where we find him in his only Crosby film: he played the ship's captain in *Anything Goes* (1936). Rather than graduate to appearing in "B" pictures he waited until decent parts were offered in major productions. For that reason he only appeared in a dozen films after *Anything Goes* until his death at the age of 72. His last two parts were in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954) and *An Affair to Remember* (1957).

MOORE, THOMAS (1779-1852) Songwriter (and poet, singer and author). You won't find an entry in this A-Z for anyone who was born before Irish composer Thomas Moore. He deserves a place because of Bing's liking of Moore's sentimental songs. In *Dixie* (1943) it was "The Last Rose of Summer" that Bing sang on stage assisted by Billy de Wolfe, Eddie Foy jnr. and Lynne Overman. Six years later, in *Top o' the Morning*, it was the equally sentimental "O 'tis Sweet to Think" that was duetted with Ann Blyth. Bing recorded the latter for Decca to tie in with the film's release but "The Last Rose of Summer" was not given a studio recording until a Warner Bros. sing-a-long album in 1962. Dublin born Moore's skill was putting words to traditional Irish airs. Peter Gammond was spot on when he wrote that Moore was responsible "for the rise and popularity of many pseudo-Irish songs of great charm and lasting quality".

MORLEY, ROBERT (1908-1992) Actor and playwright. In the last *Road* picture, Morley played "The Leader". It was his intention to send two monkeys into space but he changed his mind and decided to send Bing and Bob in *The Road to Hong Kong* (1961). By then Morley was a seasoned performer. He made his London stage debut in 1929, his Broadway debut in 1938 and his first Hollywood film (*Marie Antoinette)* also in 1938. His tripled-chinned performances could add interest to the most mundane films and his humorous magazine articles indicated that he did not take himself seriously. His son, Sheridan, wrote an affectionate biography called "Robert, My Father" which was published the year after Robert's death.

Boris Morros (far right) looks over the music for *Rhythm on the Range* with Bing and Victor Young

MORROS, BORIS (1891-1963) Music director who also produced films and spied on Russia as an American agent. Morros was a man who lived three lives during his six score years and twelve. He was born in Russia and wrote songs and directed operas before he moved to New York and worked on Broadway. He was a booking agent as well as managing two New York theatres. Paramount hired him and he had an unbroken run as musical director on five of Bing's films for that company in the late 1930s. They were *Rhythm on the Range* (1936), *Waikiki Wedding* (1937), *Double or Nothing* (1937), *Sing You Sinners* (1938) and *Paris Honeymoon* (1939). Then, in 1939, he became an independent producer. His first film following this career change was *The Flying*

Deuces (1939) starring Laurel and Hardy. His entry in "The International Motion Picture Almanac" published during the year of his death listed him as working on army training films in 1943 but the publication was silent on his work as an American agent. We may never have learned of his non-theatrical activities had he not written "Ten Years a Counterspy" which was published in 1957. But he was first and foremost a film producer and it must have been no surprise that he sold the film rights to his life. The outcome was *Man on a String* (1960) with Ernest Borgnine as Morros.

MOYER, RAY (1898-1986) Set decorator. Over a ten year period Ray Moyer worked on four Crosby pictures. As a studio backroom boy his inclusion in this A-Z would be debatable, especially as his work on his Bing films could not be regarded as out of the ordinary. However, his non-Crosby work was outstanding and justifies his alphabetical listing. In fact, it could be argued that his Bing Crosby film work formed part of his mid-career apprenticeship before moving on to more prestigious movies. *Dixie* (1943) was his debut film for Bing and that assignment was technically important as being Crosby's first three colour Technicolor feature. *Here Come the Waves* (1944), *Road to Rio* (1948) and *Just for You* (1952) followed. 1952 was also the year in which Moyer worked on a couple of films which provided Bing with cameo performances: *The Greatest Show on Earth* and *Son of Paleface.* By that time he had been with Paramount for just twenty years and he had won two Academy Awards for set decoration, both in 1950. At that time separate awards were given for black and white and colour films and Moyer's double win recognised his work on *Samson and Delilah* (colour) and *Sunset Boulevard* (black and white). As the fifties progressed so did his visual impact on Hollywood's box-office successes. *Red Garters* (1954), *Rear Window* (1954), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Funny Face* 1957) and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961) provided an unbroken run of examples of how attention to set detail enhanced a film's appearance. Moyer also won an Oscar for his work on *Cleopatra* (1963).

Keith Parkinson

UNCLE BING

Howard Crosby shares some memories of his Uncle.

While I was attending the wonderful Hofstra conference in November, I had the good fortune to meet Editor Malcolm Macfarlane, along with many other devoted Crosby fans from the UK, America, and around the world. Malcolm asked me, over breakfast one morning I think, if I would write an article of personal recollections for BING magazine. Of course I said that I would, and I even made the hair-brained promise to get it to him by mid-January!

As I was pondering the task, I remembered that I had written my own tribute in November of 1977, as a young man of twenty five. I found a copy in an old trunk, dusted it off, and thought it might be interesting to reproduce it here.

"Goodbye, Uncle Bing"

by Howard Crosby, (1977)

This is a story about hero worship. For as long as I can remember, I have always greatly admired Bing Crosby, partly because of his own achievements, but mostly because he was the younger brother of my own father, whom I loved so much. The lives of my Dad and my Uncle Bing, on the surface at least, could not have been more different. My Dad never really left his hometown of Spokane, where he was only moderately successful in the business world. Uncle Bing, on the other hand, enjoyed a career that was unparalleled in the show business world for its durability and magnetism. Yet as different as they seemed on the surface, there was a common strength of character that permeated both of their lives. And I suppose that if there can ever be any explanation for the phenomenal success of Bing Crosby, it must inevitably lie buried in the moral values and ideas about life fostered by my grandparents so long ago.

I feel that I knew my Uncle Bing, though I did not see him often. We corresponded occasionally after my Dad died, but he was always a busy man, and our worlds were aeons apart anyway. Yet because I knew and loved my Dad so much, I feel that I came to know and understand my Uncle Bing as well. Many people felt that Bing Crosby was somehow cold and aloof, but if this was how he sometimes seemed, I think it was his reaction against what he regarded as plastic emotion. He disliked artificial sentimentality very much, and he guarded himself against it. But there is no way that I could say that Uncle Bing was a cold man. On the contrary, he loved life and everything about it.

What would it be like to live your life in a fishbowl for fifty years? Fortunately most of us will not have every aspect of our lives scrutinized by millions of people. Yet this kind of attention has ultimately destroyed many public figures, both in the field of entertainment and in other public oriented endeavors. Only a handfull of people in history have been able to survive this kind of scrutiny for an extended period of time, and Uncle Bing was certainly one of them. This has always struck me as being somewhat odd, since I knew Uncle Bing to be a man who treasured privacy so much. He loved, above all, private moments with his family and friends, or the quiet solitude he found fishing in a mountain stream. His tastes were simple, and he always tended to his own needs. I can recall times when I stayed at his home when I would find him wandering around in the kitchen at six A.M. fixing his breakfast while the servants slept.

I knew that he was not an entertainer who fed upon the adulation of the crowd, and he was always positively embarrassed by those who talked of him as being some kind of legend or great man. This kind of talk grated against a deep seated humility that was both genuine and immovable. He never really believed that he was a great singer or actor, and he always attributed his success to extraordinary good luck. But I think that he always knew that he had a great God given talent for making people happy, and he was not about to let his Maker down. This was, I think, the thing that drove him to continue performing as long as the people wanted to hear him.

I well recall a time about five years ago when my Dad and Uncle Bing and I were strolling around a lonely golf course together. In the course of our conversation,

Dad asked Uncle Bing what the toughest thing that he ever had to do in show business was. I remember he pondered the question for a few moments, and then he told us a story that I will never forget. He said that it was during the war, when he had gone to Europe with a USO troop to entertain the soldiers. He desperately wanted to bring some joy into their miserable lives. So he said that he would work up some hilarious comedy routines to do, and he would sing some light and airy tunes, and he could see their faces light up with the spirit of the moment. But he said they would never let him leave the stage without singing a few bars of "White Christmas" He hated to sing it, because as he sang, the men would weep openly, and having to gaze upon their sad faces was almost more than he could bear. Uncle Bing liked to spread happiness in a world that all too often finds it in short supply.

Uncle Bing was always very generous to me. He invited me to play in his golf tournament three times, and the memories of those times will always be among my most treasured. In fact. he had sent me an invitation to play in this year's tournament before he left on his last trip to Europe. But what Uncle Bing gave to me that really mattered was not a material item at all, but rather was an intangible thing. Just as my own father showered me with his love and support, Uncle Bing left me with a feeling of pride and dignity and respect for my family. The man was inseparable from his strong faith in the precepts of his beloved Catholic Church, and he conducted himself accordingly. There has never been a time in my life when I could not say that I was proud to be Bing Crosby's nephew.

I was proud of Uncle Bing as a man, and I was also proud of his music. His music was full of happiness and love. I was born and raised in the rock era, but perhaps because of my own special bias, I have always been a real fan of Uncle Bing. Undeniably his music comes from another time and place. Yet there is nothing twisted, or hectic, or abrasive about his music. It evokes warmth, and love, and friendship, attitudes that I hope will not be lost as our society moves on. I know that there will always be a special place in my heart for the kind of music that my uncle sang.

In all of his outward appearances, he remained full of a boundless optimism that was infectious. A couple of years ago, he contributed to the lyrics of the title song of one of his new albums. The song was entitled "That's What Life Is All About", and it was, in a capsulized form. Uncle Bing's philosophy of life. One of the stanzas went like this:

Life's never easy all the time,
The hills you climb
Often lead nowhere.
Of ups and downs, I've had my share;
That's what life is all about.
I've known success, some mild acclaim;
And thinking of it gives me pleasure
And I've had some stress, the scars remain
When lady luck gave me short measure.
When things went wrong I'd fake a smile
But that's my style, 'cause I've been around.
And having been around I've found
That's what life is all about.

He certainly knew some of the best things that life has to offer during his stay, and I know that he faced many personal heartaches as well. He accepted both with equanimity and a quiet shrug of the shoulders. His carefree yet dignified approach to life was somehow just right. I feel blessed to have had Uncle Bing as a role model to imitate during my formative years.

Since Uncle Bing died, I've had a couple of chances to talk to my Aunt Mary Rose, Bing's sister. We both felt that it was wonderfully fitting that he died as he did. How much more horrible for him to keel over on stage in front of a crowd! And as much as he hated to have people make a fuss over him a long and protracted illness would have been so much worse! I know that he would have suffered terribly to think that people were distressed over his condition,

The Crosby family will surely miss our leader tremendously. When he arrived in this world on a beautiful spring day in Tacoma some seventy-four years ago, he belonged to his family. But when he checked out last month, he belonged to all the world. He spent over fifty years spreading his love around the world, and all he got in return was the love and affection of millions. I will always be proud of my Uncle Bing. I'm going to miss him, but I will never forget him.

Howard Crosby

November 1977

As I look back from the vantage of a quarter of a century later, I can stand by everything I said as a young man. Through the darkest days of "The Hollow Man", and later cousin Gary's awful book, I never wavered in my belief in Uncle Bing's moral fiber and personal decency. He remains a personal hero of mine today.

I was born in 1952, the son of Ted Crosby from his second marriage to my mother, Margaret Mattes of Spokane. My younger brother, Edward Nathaniel, would come along in 1959. Dad was 52 years old when I was born, and was already semi-retired from a career in public relations and journalism by the time I was old enough to remember. Dad was my primary parent, the one who taught me how to say my prayers, took me to school, and came to all my baseball games. Ted Crosby will always be my number one hero. We were very, very close.

By the time I was born Dad and Uncle Bing were four or five years into a non-speaking feud that would last until my grandmother died in the early 1960's. Dad never spoke about the feud, or the reasons for it (Gary Giddins knows more about it that I do), and he never bad-mouthed his brother.....to the contrary, he continued to revel in his achievements. As a child, we played nothing but Bing Crosby records around the house at

Christmas. But because of the feud, I would not personally meet my Uncle Bing until I was 14 years old. As a young boy, Bing was the famous Uncle on TV I'd never met.

I remember clearly my first day of grade school. All of the other little boys and girls were whispering and pointing at me. I was beginning to feel mighty self-conscious when Sister Lourdes spoke up and asked just what all of the chatter was about. One of the kids spoke up and said, "We all want him to tell us what it's like to be related to Bing Crosby!" I was dumbfounded. At the time, he was just somebody I saw on TV.

Ted Crosby, in his office at Washington Water & Power, circa 1944

Then in late 1963, out of the blue, Uncle Bing called one day, he and Dad talked for awhile, decided whatever it was they'd been mad about wasn't important any more, and that was it. The whole make-up conversation, after some fifteen years of stony silence, could not have lasted five minutes. Uncle Bing went on to ask Dad if he could take the time to travel to New York and visit Uncle Everett, who was hospitalized following his second leg amputation from complications of diabetes. Bing hated hospitals, but felt that someone from the family needed to go, and paid the way for Dad and Mom to travel back there. I remember when they got back, Dad said Ev was in fine spirits, said he didn't see as how he'd be needing his legs anyhow, his football days were over, and he wasn't planning to take up sprints. A year or so later, when he was dying from cancer, and in terrible pain, the stories came back that he was still telling jokes and cheering up the hospital staff right to the end. Pretty solid proof, if you ask me, that nothing life throws at us can turn a Crosby into a pessimist!

From that point on, the Christmas cards came every year. Dad and Bing were exchanging letters all the time (they both had young children in their 60's), just like they did in the 1930's and 1940's. Most of their telephone conversations would have been nauseating to the casual listener.....Dad would brag incessantly about Ed and I, and then Bing would take his turn and brag equally shamelessly about his three little ones. As old men, they re-established the brother's bond they once had as little boys sharing the same bunk in the sleeping porch on East Sinto.

I first met Uncle Bing in the spring of 1968, when he and the three children came to Spokane for some kind of event at Gonzaga. We got dressed up and went to the thing, and after it was over, Dad asked Bing if he had time to come out to the house and see his flowers. (Dad had a greenhouse full of flowers) Bing said sure, and we drove out to the house, and I remember Bing asking me about baseball (I was playing on the freshman team at Gonzaga Prep) and golf, which I was starting to get pretty serious about. He told me to talk my Dad into bringing our clubs and coming to San Francisco, so we could play some golf. Believe me, I started bugging my Dad constantly, and I think we took a family vacation to California that summer just to shut me up! I've got another great story from this first meeting, but I'm going to save it for the panel at the Centenary at Gonzaga this next spring.

That summer, we spent several days at Uncle Bing's place in Hillsborough, as part of an extended California vacation. I played my first of some 15 rounds of golf I would play with Uncle Bing, at a local club near his home one afternoon. I was just 15 years old, 6'4" tall, some 205 pounds, and I was hitting the ball as hard as I could, with a big right to left hook for lots of roll. After about eight holes of this, as we're walking down the fairway, Uncle Bing puts his arm around me and says, "Howard, learn to hit a fade. You can talk to a fade!" As soon as I got home, I went to the practice range and started working on hitting a fade, and I've been hitting one ever since. A couple of years later, I got a golf scholarship to the University of Idaho, so the advice was pretty sound. While we were there, Uncle Bing arranged for us to get the VIP treatment at Candlestick Park for a Giants-Pirates game, and two more games with the Reds.

Of course, after the stop in the Bay Area, we got back on the train and continued south, next stop Watsonville, where Auntie Kay lived. She was my godmother, and had always been a part of life, even as a little boy. Kay and Ted were very close siblings, as were Bing and Mary Rose, and they wrote to each other weekly, talked on the phone frequently, and felt a special kinship for each other. Auntie Kay was a very classy lady, and her personality was very much like Uncle Bing's. In fact, if anyone were to ask my opinion as to which one of his siblings was the most like Bing, I would absolutely say Auntie Kay. Ironically, she absolutely could not care less that he was famous. She could not stand being fussed over, never granted an interview to anyone about her brother, and often would even deny she was related.....not because she was ashamed of him, but simply because she didn't want the notoriety. How like Bing. Mary Rose, ah, wonderful Mary Rose, was just the opposite. Fun loving, life of the party, she loved to revel in the limelight of being Bing's sister. She couldn't get enough of it. Of course, the next

stop after Watsonville in 1968 was Carmel, to visit Mary Rose and Jim Pool.

From there, we went on down to LA to visit Uncle Larry and Uncle Bob. Bing and Uncle Larry had arranged for us to get the VIP treatment down there as well. After loading us down with stuff from the Crosby office, we got a private tour of the Paramount lot, where we got to see the filming of an episode of the TV show, "I Spy". While backstage there, I met Bill Cosby and had the chance to talk a little baseball with him.

I saw Uncle Bing again during a brief visit he made to Spokane two or three years later, I remember six or eight people at a table for a luncheon or something. Then in December of 1972, my Dad had another heart attack, nearly fatal, and miraculously recovered after being clinically dead for about seven minutes. Uncle Bing called me, wanted to make sure that Dad had the best medical care possible, and to make sure that we were OK financially. I told him the money was fine, but we could use all the prayers that we could get. He assured me that he would do everything he could to muster all of the rosaries and masses he could. This was December 19, 1972. The next twelve months would be my Dad's "bonus year". Although he had a pacemaker installed, his heart had been seriously damaged from this episode, and I believe that Dad knew he was not long for this world. Of course, his natural optimism led him to proclaim that with the new electronic ticker, he would live to be 100. Deep down, he knew better. As such, he was determined that we should travel to California in the summer of 1973 and visit all of his family. My mother was dead set against the idea, since such a trip would be strenuous, and his doctor wasn't too keen on the idea either. Dad wanted no part of their advice....he was determined to go. And so we did. We pretty much retraced our steps from the 1968 trip, only this time it was longer, with each stop lasting several days. Surprisingly, Dad felt pretty darn good the whole time, despite his precarious health.

I know we spent three or four days with Uncle Bing at Hillsborough, and although Dad wasn't feeling well enough to play golf, he rode a cart with us while Uncle Bing and I played a round at the San Francisco Golf Club. By this time I was pretty good, and made my way round in 73, which impressed Uncle Bing. (I was also fading my drives). After the round, we were eating lunch in the clubhouse, and a friend of his stopped at our table, and casually asked Bing if he was playing much golf. He replied, "just days".

One evening while we were at Bing's home. Dad and Bing decided to retire to the study after dinner to smoke their pipes and watch the baseball game on TV. Since neither Mother nor Kathryn cared much for pipe smoke, the boys went off by themselves. I was enough of a baseball fan not to mind the pipe smoke, so I tagged along. What happened in the parlor wasn't really baseball watching though, not that night. Dad and Uncle Bing started reminiscing about their boyhood, the cold nights snuggled together under the quilt on the cold sleeping porch, getting spanked by Kate for the sunburn they got swimming at the forbidden mill pond. Grandpa playing the banjo in the after dinner singalongs, serving mass together at 6 a.m. on those cold winter mornings, and on and on. After awhile the intercom rang, and it was Kathryn, asking if they were finished with their pipes. Bing said no, they were still smoking, (even though they were long finished). The two of them kept on with stories about their childhood until nearly midnight, though they were both early to bed types. I think they both knew that this was the last time they would ever see each other on this earth. When they finally got up to head off to bed. Dad said something like, "you know Bing, we didn't do too bad for a couple of poor Irish kids from the wrong side of town" and Bing said something like "Kate always said we'd do all right if we didn't get too full of ourselves."

Howard with Bing at San Francisco Golf Club, 1972

We went on from there and saw the other brothers and sisters, and made it back to Spokane in time for school to start. Dad's health went downhill that fall, and in mid-December, he went into the hospital for a minor prostate surgery. His heart was so weak, however, that he couldn't take the surgery and died the next day, December 19, 1973. It was one year to the day from his earlier brush with death. The bonus year was over.

Uncle Bing was one of the first to call me, right after Auntie Kay, to express his sorrow. He asked if there was anything he could do for us, anything at all, and said he couldn't come to the funeral because his presence would cause a publicity scene and detract from the solemnity of the funeral mass. I told him I understood, and besides,

Mary Rose and Kay would be there. A few days later Bing himself would be in the hospital having a large lesion removed from one of his lungs. It turned out not to be cancer.

My story of my recollections of Uncle Bing has run on for quite some time now, and I'm only about half finished, so with Malcolm's indulgence, I'll quit here for now and pick up the fabric in 1974, in time for the summer issue of BING.

Howard Crosby

(Editor: What a lovely heart-warming article. Our sincere thanks are due to Howard for taking the trouble to set down his thoughts for us. We look forward eagerly to the next instalment.)

The historic Crosby House has problems

The house originally built by Bing's grandfather (and Howard's great-grandfather), Nathaniel Crosby III for his bride, Cordelia Jane Smith, is still standing at 703 Deschutes Way S.W., Tumwater, Washington. The two-story home is one of the oldest wood-framed pioneer houses in the area but a recent structural analysis showed significant deterioration in the structural integrity of the house. However the City of Tumwater is keen to preserve the property and it has allocated $80,000 in its 2003 Capital Facilities Plan toward fixing the house. It will seek grants for the rest of the estimated $170,000 job.

The Daughters of the Pioneers take the credit for originally saving the property as they purchased it in 1947 and restored it with pioneer-era furnishings. The group still operates the home. The building, which is closed each winter, can still accommodate visitors and is open to the public from 1 to 3 p.m. Thursdays and Sundays, or by appointment, March through November.

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Ron Field, by e-mail from Bermagui, NSW, Australia.

The Bing Crosby Conference at Hofstra was a wonderfully magnificent experience. The whole atmosphere was one of friendliness and compatibility. Kathryn was so relaxed and also approachable, as were the many other people there. It was wonderful to hear the experiences people have had with Bing and the effect he had on everyone over the years. And it is amazing that there are people that knew him from the early 30's and 40's. I was fortunate in being able to present a paper - 'Bing Crosby - The Man I Knew' - and I would like to think that it was favourably received. Roll on to Spokane.

Re BING 132, just having read 'Sinatra on Sinatra' reminded me that when I was in Vancouver on the way to Hofstra, Sinatra Jr. was on a late night talk show, I was surprised just how much he looks like his old man. Amazing really.

Graham Pascoe, Bathurst, NSW, Australia

It was good to meet you at that wonderful Hofstra conference. Helen and I are just getting ourselves organised after our five-weeks visit to USA. The pile of mail which awaited our return was impressive and I've not even had a chance to look at the latest issue of BING which David Currington sent me.

We live 130 miles west of Sydney and we've already had two overnight visits to Sydney since our return. Yesterday we went to an enjoyable luncheon at David's home and I gave a short report on the conference to those present. Early in February I hope to drive to Melbourne to see my brother and attend a film night of The Victorian Bing Crosby Society and talk to them about it also.

Today, December 24, I've just been interviewed by our local newspaper (and photographed) regarding my Hofstra visit, so Bing should get some publicity in Bathurst next week. I played a couple of tracks from George O'Reilly's CD on my community radio program yesterday.

Reaching For The Moon was shown on Pay TV here last night (but we don't subscribe) and Gordon Wall told me that *The Bells of St. Mary's* is on this month. Our national newspaper, *The Weekend Australian*, included two references to Bing in its December 21-22 edition. One was not complimentary, linking him to the commercialisation of Christmas, so I've written to the author in defence of Crosby.

Linda and Stan Shipp, Port Hope, Michigan, USA

What a distinct pleasure it was to meet you, Michael Crampton, Wig Wiggins and the rest of the fine people who make up the International Crosby Circle. We are still in awe of the three days we spent at Hofstra University. How fantastic it was to spend time with so many people who have an affection for Bing that is like no other. It is a feeling that is so hard to describe. Meeting Kathryn Crosby, nephew Howard Crosby and grandson Steve Crosby gave all of us a personal contact with the man who was the greatest entertainer of the 20th century. The majority of presentations were well prepared and insightful. The CD we received from George O'Reilly is a keepsake we will always treasure. The entire experience on the beautiful campus at Hofstra University was a once in a lifetime experience!

Bob Achorn, Sutton, Massachusetts, USA

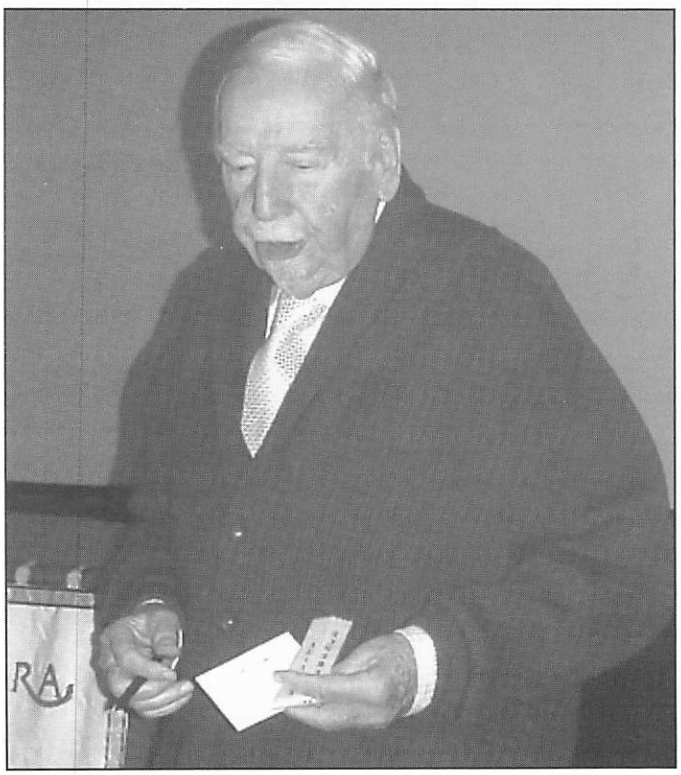
It was a great pleasure to meet you at the Hofstra conference. The panels with which you were involved were uniformly excellent, and I thought the whole affair was a success - although obviously I missed some of the same-time panels. All the ICC people I heard were excellent.

The Hofstra Cultural Center initiated these conferences on world culture in 1976, while Bing Crosby was still living. So far, there have been 121 of them. Subjects have ranged from George Orwell to Pope Innocent III to Mozart to Margaret Thatcher. Recent conferences on the impact of popular artists involved Frank Sinatra and Louis Armstrong. Both were warmly revisited at the Crosby sessions for their

ties to Bing.

The three-day conference drew about 350 persons. There were 109 panelists - some of them participating in several panels. Gary Giddins was a mainstay of the conference and he took repeated opportunities to describe Bing with evident admiration, as "the coolest." He reveled in the way that Bing could, with seemingly casualness, hold center-stage. That was true even near the end of his starry years, as when Bing corked a wine bottle with a couple of taps of his elbow in the duet with Sinatra in "High Society." Frank seemed oddly tense. Bing seemed utterly relaxed. Who knows what either was thinking? Giddins provided a classy keynote address - "Nothing Is What It Seems" — and did it without a visible note. He debunked some of the negative stories about Bing by industriously tracking down sources and finding they were unreliable or non-existent.

Skitch Henderson, still playing the piano and conducting symphonic music at 84, had a close-up view of Bing's work habits as a regular on Crosby's radio shows 56 years ago. "He was the most disciplined performer I ever worked with," Skitch said, "and a fantastic human being." Considering Henderson's reputation for utter frankness, as well as the broad range of musical artists with whom he has performed, those were friendly words indeed. He was asked about working with Frank Sinatra after Crosby. Henderson grimaced. A look that might have been disgust flashed across his face. "No comment," he finally growled. That was untypical Henderson, since he has long had a reputation for blunt talk, no holds barred. But he got his point across.



Skitch Henderson in action at Hofstra.

The remaining Crosby family helped the proceedings. Although two of Bing's four living children, Nathaniel and Harry, had been billed early on as panelists, they were otherwise occupied. But their mother, Kathryn, was a tower of strength - serving on panels, commenting from the audience, sharing the hotel shuttle vans with attendees and putting on a lovely performance in which she sang three of Bing's songs, including "The Second Time Around."

By its nature, the conference took a positive view of Crosby's influence on the culture. But the feeling was not total and universal, and that was all right, too. Ervin Drake, a dandy dresser and a longtime songwriter, gave Bing a little tickle for always singing "the wrong note" in Drake's hit song, "Come to the Mardi Gras." Drake also recalled a time when, as a young songwriter, he introduced himself to Bing at the Friars Club in New York, hoping to strike up a relationship. But Bing gave him the noted "see-through stare" with his icy blue eyes, and nothing came of it - at least at the time. But Drake wasn't nasty about it all. He was there to share in the Crosby success, and didn't try to deny it.

Bob DeFlores provided some fine old film clips of Bing in action, the earliest dating back to the Whiteman days of 1928. The most startling was Bing's screen test for Warner Bros.' proposed Will Rogers film. Bing, in a shaggy wig and a putty nose, tried to capture Rogers' Oklahoma drawl, with limited success. Members of the Warner Bros. stock company, notably Dane Clark and Brenda Marshall, supported Bing in the lengthy test. The role eventually went to a non-professional, Will Rogers Jr. The film turned out to be not as good as its subject.

In addition to the musicians, music critics, family, friends and fans who served as panelists, there were the professors, most not from Hofstra. They had serious observations to offer about Crosby's place in world culture ("the magician of the war effort"), and they offered them at some length - sometimes longer than the panel format would easily allow. This professorial involvement apparently struck *The New York Times* as amusing or curious or weird. A month after the Hofstra conference, the *New York Times* in its Sunday Word for Word feature devoted a half-page to short excerpts from the papers of seven professors, all under the headline of *Deconstructing Bing Crosby: The Crooner As Cheese Product*. The selected excerpts tended to be the most fanciful in those papers. Some, in cold black type, no doubt seemed a trifle absurd. They had sounded more reasonable in person when the panelists had the opportunity to explain their views. Whether *The New York Times'* point was to make fun of Crosby or of the excesses to which certain professors may sometimes be driven - or both - was not entirely clear. Perhaps *NYT* was simply astounded that anyone was still talking seriously about Bing. The entertainer - Mr. Everyman, as Giddins called him - remains a cultural icon, 25 years after his death.

The audience for the Crosby conference was not particularly youthful. Hofstra students were invited to attend without paying the $100 registration fee; few did. But panelists ranged in age over a 60-year span, with Joey Bushkin at 86 upholding the honor of the seniors. He had some kind thoughts about Bing, and some sharper observations about others. He recalled playing piano for the Tommy Dorsey orchestra in the early '40s, when Frank Sinatra was working as the band singer. The explosive, tyrannical Dorsey was not a favorite of his employees. When Bushkin was asked at Hofstra about playing for Rosemary Clooney and Bing Crosby in the 1970s, he responded with great emphasis: "It was sure a step up from Tommy Dorsey!"

Jody Rosen, author of the new book, "White Christmas," represented the younger end of the panel spectrum. He dealt with the Irving Berlin song in fascinating detail. In its background there was the claim of Philip Roth, the novelist, that as a songwriter of Jewish origin Berlin had cleverly crafted the song as a way of turning a Christian holiday into "schlock." Rosen argues it would be an overstatement to portray Berlin's writing of the song as an act of Jewish defiance. He notes that Berlin's family said he thought of Christmas as a secular holiday (which he enjoyed.) One of Irving Berlin's two daughters, Linda Emmett, a delightful panelist, had the final word on her father's mindset. When

asked how he could write a song celebrating a Christian holiday, she said he replied: "I wrote it as an American."

ICC members can take satisfaction in the high quality of their representation. Wig Wiggins and Gord Atkinson were among the best of the panelist moderators. They spoke clearly and briefly, they understood who the members of their panels were and they kept close track of the time their panels were allowed. That was not always true of other panels, although there were a number of good moderators.

Two of many fascinating comments:

Kathryn Crosby: "Music was Bing's life. He sang all the time."

Skitch Henderson: "I always felt he sang for the musicians in the band - and the people loved it."

****

As for the question: Did **Margaret Lenhart** exist?, you probably have received clear answers by now. The issue provoked me into some digging but I couldn't come up with anything new. At first, I supposed that her voice might have been used by Paramount to dub Virginia Dale's brief part in the song in question. But Geoff Milne wrote that the soundtrack recording, in November, 1941, was actually done by Dale. That seems reasonable, since prior to "Holiday Inn" she had played roles in at least three Hollywood musicals, and was a comedy song-and-dance performer with Clark Gable in "Idiot's Delight." She had some musical talent. By May, 1942, when Decca made its studio recording of the score, Lenhart played the Dale bit. Maybe Dale was busy, or too expensive, or too insignificant, or something. Margaret Lenhart's connection to Bing continued at least seven months until the Kraft Music Hall broadcast of December 10, when she sang a duet with Bing" "Why Don't You Fall in Love With Me?," a song that I do not recall. Her picture with Bing appears on Page 123 of Pairpoint's radio book.

Margaret Lenhart appears on the Kraft Music Hall

After that, I hit a blank wall. Perhaps she came out of one of the Crosby supporting groups — Music Maids, Rhythmaires, Darby, Terr or whomever. Or maybe, like Florence George, she was a Crosby relative who was given an opportunity. There was a Billy "Bull Fiddle" Lenhart who, with a male partner, provided music in several cowboy movies in the late '30s. As Butch and Buddy, they worked in three Universal films in 1940. Could Margaret have been wife, sister, daughter or mother to Billy?

I'm sure you'll have all the answers. I look forward to them.

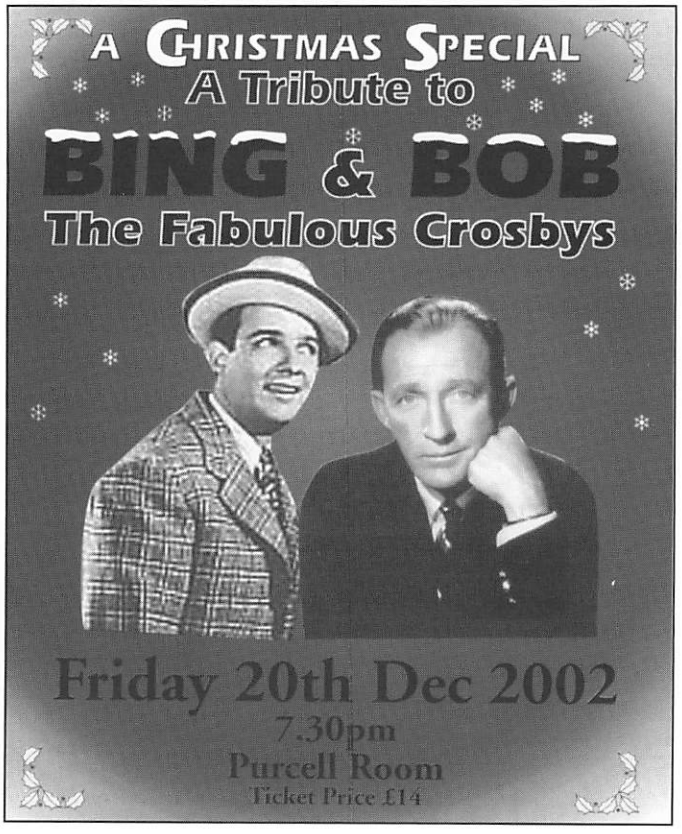
(Editor: Sadly, I know nothing more about Ms Lenhart. No doubt all will be revealed one day.)

Trevor Wagstaff, Hornchurch, Essex, UK

Stuart Brockbank put on a very good tribute programme at Romford Library on the evening of 30th. October. It was entitled "Bing, Bix and Bob" and utilised mainly early 30s recordings with Bing having around 80% of the playings. About 50 attended and I met a new ICC member, Ernest Dolman.

Also I went to the *Bing and Bob - The Fabulous Crosbys* show you mentioned on page 58 of the last magazine. The evening was most enjoyable and the room was nearly full, just the last three rows were empty. I guess there were over 250 people there. Excellent jazz band and Roy Chappell doing a nice job for Bing. Roy was in good voice, singing "Dinah", "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter", Basin St. Blues" etc., finishing with, of course, "White Christmas" (twice) which provided a wonderful ambience.

I have written to the Guinness World Records people complaining about Bing's statistics not being in the 2003 edition. What's the use of world records if they are not included? I'll let you know if I get a response.



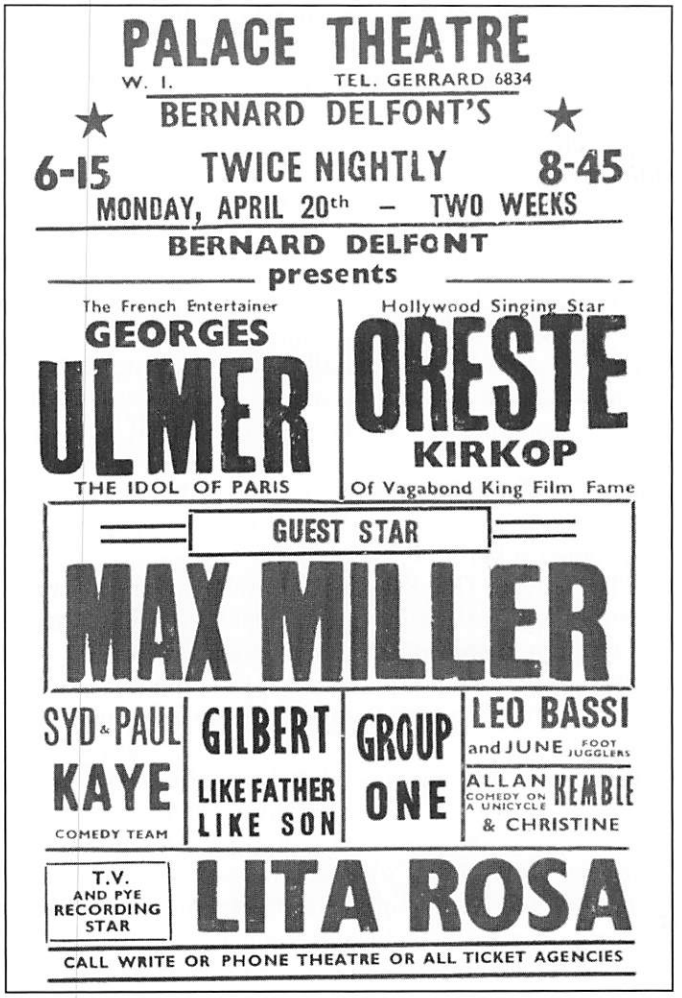
John Martin, Easington Village, Co. Durham, UK

Re the BBC2 documentary *Bing on Bing* on Christmas Day. At last, after all these years a worthy tribute to Bing. A long and hugely successful career encapsulated in a too brief 50 minutes. Nevertheless it went some way to show why Bing was so enormously popular in films, records and radio. Sadly it ended on a unhappy fact that is glaringly obvious, i.e. that his annual Christmas shows did fatal damage to his critical acceptance as a great performer of popular song. The fostering of the image of a genial, singalong, fatherly, middle-aged figure remains the perceived image to this day. Consequently (unlike Presley and Sinatra) Bing is not remembered for the period when he was at his incomparable

best. *Bing on Bing* went a small way to redress the balance. An excellent but so tantalising brief glimpse of the Bing who changed the world of popular song.

John Benstead, Rotherhithe, London, UK

Regarding Bing's "Maltese Connection" in the winter edition, although 'The Vagabond King' may have had a limited showing Oreste seems to have had another string to his bow sharing top of the bill in the West End in April, 1959. Lita Rosa is possibly the only remaining performer on the bill still with us!



Mark Spry, London, UK, by e-mail

Bing on Bing was really well produced as a vivid overview I thought, except the line where the commentator states "thankfully (McCormack's and Jolson's unamplified styles) became a thing of the past". I am sure that Bing, "in his own words", would not have made such a bald statement.

I got Gary Giddins's bio "Pocketful of Dreams" for Christmas and Bing's regard for McCormack and Jolson, and attention to elements of their styles, is cited plentifully. The reason that this point is pertinent and not pedantic is that the same superseding disregard can be expressed for Sinatra with respect to Bing, for Presley with respect to Sinatra, and for The Beatles with respect to Presley. This month I'll be buying a CD of Music Hall from 1915 and British Sea Power's first album, from musical genres 100 years apart, but I make a case for listening to the best of all music.

We enjoyed the *Fabulous Crosbys* show immensely. I try to sing like Bing (they made me sing "White Christmas" at my office Christmas dinner...), but Roy Chappell has the style indeed!

(Editor: Stan Henderson was another who disliked the disparaging reference to Jolson and McCormack and following his letter to the BBC, he received an apology from them for any offence caused. Overall however, most people were very impressed by the 'Bing On Bing' documentary. The BBC also put out the Bing episode in their 'Living Famously' series and Ken Brown was one of several who wrote about this.)

Ken Brown, Pinner, Middlesex, UK

I just had to write and let you know how very much I enjoyed the BBC Television programme *Living Famously: Bing Crosby*. I felt that the programme gave a very accurate assessment of Bing's life and carer, and all the contributors were most informative. Congratulations are due especially to your good self and other ICC members, including Gary Giddins and Ken Barnes for keeping Bing's name in the public eye! It is most encouraging that we have had two documentaries on BBC Television in such close proximity.

(Editor: See Bert Bishop's 'Bing on the Box' for full reviews of both programmes.)

Maurice Jackson, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, UK

I have just bought the book "Bing Crosby: Crooner of the Century" and I must say how pleased I am to get it. It gives a good coverage of his career right through his life and includes many other artists who worked with him over the years. I have been a Crosby fan for well over 50 years and I have to say this is one of the best books I have seen about him. I can certainly recommend it to ICC members.

Frank Challenger, Ripley, Derbyshire, UK

Reference letter on page 34 of BING 132 about a mention by member Ken Heason of seeing a Bing Crosby signature in a book at the Midland Railway Centre. This person happens to be a locomotive driver at Toton sidings, Nottinghamshire. His surname is Crosby but whether his Christian name is Bing or just a nickname I do not know, but his friends call him Bing. He is a volunteer worker at the Midland Railway Centre of which I am a member.

(Editor: Well, that clears up the query nicely and our thanks are due to Frank for clarifying this for us.)

John Bignell, Wembley, Middlesex, UK

Many thanks for BING 132 which I have read with the usual great interest. I particularly liked the tribute by Norman Wolfe to Father "Tony" Lehmann. What a tribute to Bing that Tony had to abandon his splendid midnight mass in the late 1980s because overflow crowds caused traffic problems.

Also I was pleased you included a tribute to the late Ward Kimball who survived to the splendid age of 88. The Firehouse Five Plus Two have long been favourites of mine and I regret Bing did not record with them commercially. Bing and the Firehouse Five would have made a terrific album

The fulsome tributes to Rosemary Clooney were all fully deserved. Bing and Rosie were such great friends and their teaming together on so many occasions were certainly to their and our mutual benefit.

I read the detailed information on Russ Columbo and in response to write and tell you what I think, I did write about Columbo many years ago and my opinion has not changed - not in the same class as Bing in any way, shape of form! As far as comparisons with Bing are concerned, the only singers I can take seriously are Dick Todd, Michael Holliday and the very early Perry Como. Frank Sinatra soon gave up trying to imitate Bing and developed his own unique style, but even he had imitators in Bobby Darin and Matt Monro who could often come close to him. However Bing in the early 30s had a voice which no one could get within a thousand miles of him.

Splendid news that dear Kathryn has at last had her follow

up book on her life with Bing published.

The extensive coverage of Bing's golfing career was warmly welcomed. It is because Bing had so many interesting hobbies and activities that our magazine will continue to flourish. I read recently that a magazine in tribute to The Beatles recently folded after having reported "all that needs to be said." These "newer fellas" do not have the staying power, do they?

Pat Forster, Midhurst, West Sussex, UK

I was dismayed to read in the last BING of a reported conversation I had with John Bignell about the war-time broadcasts of Bing's records.

These are the true facts. During the Blitz from September 1940 until early in 1941, the BBC broadcast a programme of Bing's records daily between 7:15 and 7:30 every morning to coincide approximately with the sounding of the "all-clear" in London. A rumour spread that these had been ordered by Churchill. It is understandable that the BBC cannot confirm this now. It was 60 years ago, there was a war on, Broadcasting House was bombed, and many broadcasts were made from temporary studios. So this must remain conjecture.

However, the broadcasts were a definite fact - I know because I listened to them every day, either at the Wardens ARP post if I was on duty or at home before setting off for work.

Reg Thompson, Chigwell, Essex, UK

In 1976, I was having trouble in getting tickets to see Bing at the London Palladium. Also at that time, I had a broken right arm so on my behalf my wife wrote to Bing saying how disappointed I was that I couldn't get any tickets. The great man wrote back the following letter and I wonder how many so called super stars of today would have even bothered to answer a letter such as mine?

There was a happy ending as I did manage to see him twice in 1976 and once in 1977. Great!

Dear Mrs. Thompson:
We have a real problem about the tickets for the Palladium concert. We have allocated a certain number for all the Fan Clubs and if you have any association with any of these Clubs, possibly they can provide you with tickets.

There are only a certain number of seats available and the requests are coming in so constantly that it's impossible for us to take care of them all. Robert Paterson is the Producer of the show and has nothing to do with the allotment of the tickets, nor does the theatre. It's purely up to me and I'm just trying to see that everybody gets some who really are entitled to them because of past associations and loyalties.

I hope you understand, and I hope when they go on public sale you're able to get the tickets you desire. If not, write a personal letter to me care of the theatre and I'll see what I can do when I arrive over there. As I say, we are not giving any tickets to anybody except members of the Fan Club and to those, only a limited number. We are trying desperately to prevent scalping and things of that nature.

I hope that you are able to see the concert -
Very truly yours,
Bing

Tom Degan, Goshen, New York, USA - as seen on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum

I think a great way to pay tribute to Bing would be to have a mass said for him on his birthday. I'm having a mass said for Harry Lillis Crosby at 5:00 PM on Saturday, 3 May 2003 at St. John's Church in Goshen, NY. Devout Catholic that he was, I think der Bingle would appreciate it. God rest his soul. Contact your local church (assuming you're Catholic and even if you're not) and see if you can have it done.

Chesterfield Cigarettes presents "Music That Satisfies"

Lionel Pairpoint writing in his wonderful book ". . . And Here's Bing!" laments that:

" 'Music That Satisfies' appears to be the only one of Bing Crosby's sponsored programmes (as a solo artist) of which there are no surviving examples. Having said that and at the risk of being accused of cynicism, there may well be, on his deathbed somewhere, a white-haired, self-styled, Crosby 'enthusiast' who is gloating over a crackly, distorted excerpt that is destined to accompany him to his grave."

Well, Lionel was almost right but surprise, surprise, a surviving show has been found! It was Gary Giddins who alerted me to this possibility telling me that the Lennie Hayton collection at the New York Public Library contained a number of 'Music That Satisfies' shows. Contact with the helpful staff at the library soon produced a list of the shows they held but only a few appeared to relate to dates when Bing had appeared. But first some background.

The 'Music That Satisfies' series began in 1932 with Arthur Tracy, Ruth Etting and Alexander Gray appearing on different nights of the week accompanied by Nat Shilkret and his Orchestra. Norman Brokenshire, who by his own admission already had a severe drink problem, was given another chance to make good when he was brought in as the announcer. Brokenshire wrote about the series in his autobiography "This is Norman Brokenshire" (published in 1954 by David McKay Company Inc. of New York) and he gets rather muddled with dates and artists but it does seem that 'Music That Satisfies' was re-launched in January 1933 as a six nights a week show shared between Bing Crosby, Ruth Etting and Tom Howard and George Shelton. Lennie Hayton came in to conduct the orchestra. Ruth Etting was replaced later by Jane Froman. In his book, Brokenshire writes about Ruth Etting (whose story was immortalised by Doris Day in the film *Love Me Or Leave Me*) and then goes on to talk about Bing.

I soon learned that to get to Ruth without Gimpy [Colonel Snyder] was impossible. One night I asked her to have dinner with me after the show. Her answer was short and to the point; I don't know whether the wistfulness I read into it was really there or if I imagined it. "Life is so short," she said; "why make it any shorter?" She nodded in the direction of Gimpy, standing a little distance away; for the first time I noticed that he wore not only a flashy tie but a shoulder holster. A strange companion for a girl whose songs were invariably lovely, sweet, and plaintive.

The other two days of the week were filled by Bing Crosby. Here was a young fellow who at the time wasn't doing any too well out on the West Coast. He had

left the Rhythm Boys, Paul Whiteman's harmony singers, and subsequently got in some financial trouble. He had tried to pay off his debts and get squared away by doing a series of short comedy films whether because of poor management or something else, he had succeeded only in getting in deeper.

At the time NBC rejoiced in possession of the services of the great Russ Columbo. Mr. Paley was determined to find competition for Columbo and offered Crosby a contract. Bing took it, and after a not-too-good show of his own was sold to Chesterfield - that did it!

The Crosby-Columbo "feud" was whipped up into a fierce publicity conflagration. Bing won hands down. Strangely enough he doesn't mention the episode in his book Call Me Lucky, yet I personally feel that the series of programs he did for us was the real beginning of his success.

Time went on, and it was decided that "Chesterfield Time" could be reprogramed to cover the whole range of entertainment, from opera to slapstick.

As I say, Brokenshire is rather muddled and Bing had of course enjoyed great success in the film *The Big Broadcast* by then and was being paid very well to appear on the variety stage. But what is significant in Brokenshire's account is his reference to "Chesterfield Time". Incidentally, Bing couldn't remember much about the shows either according to a letter to Larry Kiner contained in an excellent booklet about the series put out by Larry in 1976, which we reproduce on page 59.

Ruth Etting & Bing

So back to the present day, I arranged to visit the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts in the Lincoln Center whilst en route for Hofstra. I had arranged for the material I wanted to hear to be ready in advance and I had also spotted some other potentially interesting items in the library's collection.

Bing appeared on "Music That Satisfies" twice a week for about thirteen weeks in the early part of 1933 and there were three dates in the library listing that were relevant, March 8, March 15 and March 25. The first two shows were on tape whilst that for March 25 had the following note alongside it. "Access restricted. Advanced notification required for use. No contents listed." I had however told the library that I should like to hear the contents.

The tapes for the first two shows were played and you can imagine my disappointment when I found that they were simply the orchestral numbers. Presumably Lennie Hayton had them recorded for his own purposes. Still at least we now know a little more about the shows.

March 8. The orchestra plays an unidentified song from Earl Carroll's Vanities and also "I Gotta Right To Sing The Blues".

March 15. The orchestra plays "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" and "What Do I Care, It's Home".

The show for March 25 had been recorded on what was described as a flexible acetate and the library staff had had great difficulty in extracting the contents and putting them on a CD. I held my breath as the CD began to play and then I heard Norman Brokenshire say:

"Let's forget about the week, it's the weekend, it's Chesterfield Time!"

Then Bing is heard singing the first few lines of "You Are Too Beautiful" and Brokenshire comes back to talk about Bing who is subsequently heard singing "What Do I Care, It's Home", a version that was fairly similar to his commercial recording of the previous month. A guitar accompaniment is apparent and presumably this was Eddie Lang.

The announcer then comes in to tell us about the virtues of smoking Chesterfield Cigarettes prior to the orchestral interlude which was a rumba called "Tony's Wife" which features some fancy clarinet playing (Artie Shaw?). After the orchestra has concluded, Bing and Norman Brokenshire exchange some dialogue about Bing changing the mood of the show with his next song which turns out to be a full version of "You Are Too Beautiful". Bing sings a verse first with guitar accompaniment then launches into the chorus powerfully and with real feeling. A great performance! Another commercial from the announcer has to be endured before Bing returns to sing "Moon Song (That Wasn't Meant For Me)". A pleasant ballad with guitar prominent. The needle had jumped once or twice when the CD was created from the acetate. Bing then speaks saying "My show is over, all that's left is..." and then he segues into "Just An Echo" before whistling as Brokenshire talks over him to tell us that "Chesterfield Time" will return on Monday on CBS.

I was limp as a rag by now. A real "Music That Satisfies" show dredged up from the long lost ether! So how can we get it released? It seems that the Lennie Hayton estate will have to give permission first so I am attempting to contact them in an effort to start a dialogue.

Interesting that the show was known as "Chesterfield Time" by then. Presumably the previous

title was too cumbersome. At last, we can confirm that "Just An Echo" was used as a theme at the end of Bing's appearances. We had thought that it was used as an opening signature tune like "Where the Blue of the Night" but judging from the show I heard there was just an announcement followed by Bing singing a few bars from the featured song of the evening.

What other treasures did the library contain? Looking through their on-line catalogue I had picked out some other interesting items which I'll describe one by one.

1. Kraft Music Hall - May 20, 1937. This 78 rpm aluminium-based 12" acetate was part of the Lee Tracy collection and we know that Mr. Tracy was a guest on the show that night. Whilst we knew what songs Bing sang, no-one had heard them for years and again it was with eager anticipation that I sat there in my headphones sending a message for playback to commence. It soon became apparent that the only parts of the show which had been preserved were those featuring Lee Tracy. First we hear Bing and Lee talking about Lee's latest film *Behind The Headlines* (also known as *Tomorrow's Headlines*) then there is dialogue between Bing, Lee and Lionel Stander about Bing's slang talk ("stationhouse", "zingy" "long haircut" etc.) which brings laughter from the audience. The next cut has a WW1 sketch involving Bing, Lee, Lionel Stander and William Gargan. "Colonel" Stander whispers to "Major" Crosby that they are going to advance and whispers pass down the line to first "Captain" Tracy and then "Lieutenant" Gargan. The whispers go back and forth among the personnel until eventually someone says that the front line is 15 miles away and "Why are we whispering." The payoff comes when "Colonel" Stander says that he has laryngitis! Unfortunately there are no songs from Bing on the recording which was obviously done specifically for Lee Tracy.

2. Bell Telephone Hour, July 1, 1946. We had seen adverts that Bing was scheduled to appear on the show that night but we had not been able to find out anything about his appearance. The mystery was soon solved when the taping from the 16" acetate started to play. Nelson Eddy was the guest that night. Bing had obviously cried off.

3. "Reaching for the Moon" (from the Irving Berlin collection). As we know, Bing sang just one song in the film *Reaching for the Moon*. Several more songs were to be included but these were cut at the last moment. I wondered whether Bing had recorded the song for the soundtrack and noticing several discs of the number in the collection I asked to hear them. Sad to say, none of the versions were by Bing.

So, a very useful visit to the New York Public Library. In the meantime we noticed an auction on eBay of four 12 inch 78 RPM aluminium records containing the complete *Woodbury Soap* radio programme from September 18, 1934. The discs were recorded by Advertisers' Recording Service, New York. The discs sold for $536 even though the show has been available on LP for many years. I wonder how much would be obtained for the *Music That Satisfies* programme?

I was pondering what would turn up next when I received an e-mail from Gary Giddins stating:

> "Kathryn Crosby invited Michael Feinstein to rummage through some of the many boxes of material Bing left, and among the remarkable things that came to light was a recording of the transcription disc Bing made of "Poor Little G String" for the film *March of Time*, on December 30, 1929. As you know, no one knew such a recording existed—and I can tell you that, after my book came out, one person challenged me as to whether Bing's segments were made at all. Well, that issue is put to rest. Chills ran up my spine as we listened to it, in the basement of Michael's castle-like home, much of which he has converted into a magnificent shrine to the history of American entertainment. The performance features Bing in full stentorian, balladeer mode, the voice huge and beautifully captured. The rights belong to MGM, and Michael is scrupulous about not allowing copies to be made. Yet at some point perhaps it can be released. Last year Turner issued a big box of Sinatra's Hollywood years, and with "G String," *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove*, *Going Hollywood*, *High Society*, and *Man on Fire*, there's enough material for a similar Crosby disc.
>
> Michael also has a great number of Woodbury scripts."
>
> **Gary Giddins**

Wow! We await further details in due course. More excitement came when member Harold Sunners advised us that Michael Feinstein also has a number of Bing's Woodbury show acetates. Apparently these discs were purchased by Michael from the George Stoll Estate. He hopes to issue these (with the authorization of the Crosby estate) towards the end of the year as part of a three CD compilation on the Concord label.

The first CD will be previously unreleased Bing material from the thirties which has come from various sources and will include all the usable material from Michael's Woodbury discs. The Woodbury acetates are said to be wonderful but frustrating because many performances are cut off in mid stream when the disc runs out, or the next disc is missing. For example, there are about 30 seconds of Bing singing 'St Louis Blues' with the Boswells Sisters before the acetate runs out! It seems that there is, in complete form, maybe 30 minutes of full songs and then maybe 30-35 minutes of partial material. But there is more material from other sources that Mr. Feinstein has found to fill out the disc. He also has some things that he hasn't restored yet and doesn't know if he will be able to, including some metal discs of Bing with Kitty Carlisle (again from Woodbury) that have a corrosion on them in the middle. Apparently they are songs from one of the two movies Bing made with Kitty.

We wish Michael Feinstein every success in his efforts to bring us this rare Bing material

Malcolm Macfarlane

Bert Bishop's
BING ON THE BOX

It is quite remarkable that some twenty-five years after Bing's passing that there is still so much to write about and report. So much so that I've been asked to curtail this column in order that the Hofstra Conference receives the coverage it deserves. Much of the airtime reviews will have to be put on the back burner on this occasion, but thanks go to all the dedicated members who take much time and trouble to send in cassettes and make welcome 'phone calls. A typical example is Nick Carter who, on the last day of January, rang me from Deal to say that after playing "Where My Caravan Has Rested" the BBC R3 'CD Masters' classical music presenter, Rob Cowan, asked if anyone could supply information on Bing's 1946 recording "When You Make Love To Me" of which Jascha Heifetz was joint composer. Needless to say this has been dealt with.

The wireless coverage of the 25th Anniversary of Bing's demise was considerable. In the U.K. just about every popular music programme recognized this event both musically and rhetorically, with especial mention of David Lowe and Chris Robinson, great supporters of all thing's Bing down there at BBC Radio Bristol and BBC Radio South & West. I must also include the exceptional three hour special laid on by Keith Skues some of which has already been reported previously. Likewise, Arthur Blood and Maurice Beardmore were again on hand with some of their favourites in recognition of the 1977 anniversary. Two boys and a microphone doing their bit for Bing up there on Radio Derby.

Similarly, Mr. Christmas was well to the fore during the December festivities. All our usual presenters did him proud; but apart from the considerable number of spins given to his seasonal songs it was virtually impossible to be in the average department store for half an hour or more without hearing a track from the man who was the first to popularize Christmas music for the masses. Over in the States, the tireless Greg Van Beek was able to promote Bing on Club 60, WTKM 104.9 FM, Ted Hutton's WOKY Am 920 show and, inevitably, Ronnie Paul's Flying Home programme from Fresno, California, which goes out on KAAT Radio 104.1 FM. Plenty of Crosby numbers, particularly from the "A Time To Be Jolly" album.

Television, though, has been the winning medium this time around. UK films that have been available to view on either network or cable / satellite include *Road to Rio, White Christmas, The Bells of St. Mary's, Robin and the 7 Hoods,* and the ubiquitous *High Society.* Similarly, American channels have screened these movies along with *Mr. Music, High Time* and *The Country Girl,* and any number of flickers in which Bing's un-credited, humorous guest spots featured. In February, *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove* made a welcome reappearance on our screens in the UK, courtesy of the TCM channel; Bing crooning "With Every Breath I Take" to the patrons and Mary Pickford in particular.

Mary Pickford introduces Bing at the Cocoanut Grove

Christmas Day, though, was undoubtedly the flagship occasion as far as 'the box' is concerned in the UK. We all expect the film *White Christmas* to be screened at that time of the year and, usually, we are not disappointed. But how enjoyable to have that Christmas Eve event followed the next day by a welcome and timely documentary on the life and times of the Twentieth Century's most successful and popular entertainer as his one hundredth birthday anniversary looms. Read on.

BING ON BING

Subtitled *Bing Crosby - in his own words,* the fifty minute documentary went out at 5 p.m. on BBC2 following on from the Queen's Speech and the subsequent, and inevitable, post prandial nap. With several Crosby stalwarts on hand to bring truth, substance and photographs to the presentation it promised well and, in the main, delivered. Thus, as the

credits rolled we noted the names of Malcolm Macfarlane, Ron Bosley, Gord Atkinson, Mark Scrimger and Gary Giddins. Throughout the screening Bing's own commentary, taken from TV interviews, blended with the visuals in justification of the programme's title. Though his contribution in this regard was relatively minimal I thought.

The opening scene was an excerpt from the film *White Christmas* where Bing goes on TV to promote the General's big night. This low impact emergence from behind a curtain quickly merged into the high profile classic duet "Now You Has Jazz" from *High Society*, over which Bing was asked to describe what he was really like.

"One of the fellas; very ordinary; good ear for music; can play golf; very bad taste in clothes; romantic; terribly sentimental; impressionable; a little overweight. That's about it really."

Such was his humble response. But the narrator, Ian McShane, soon demonstrated the true reality of Bing's life and times with the words:

"Imagine the record career of Michael Jackson combined with the film career of Tom Cruise and emotional appeal of The Queen Mother. Bing could do no wrong."

Then it was back to the very beginning to commence a visual and musically illustrated biography that began with the historic journey to Los Angeles with fellow adventurer Alton Rinker. With cross cutting and interpolated dialogue between the narrator and Bing himself, his early years in the Prohibition jazz age and association with black musicians, notably Louis Armstrong, were admirably conveyed in a no holds barred, unfolding story of youthful excess. From excess to success was a slow but exciting journey, and Bing was seen to savor and relish every minute of it as he developed his natural singing style and recognition of the advantages of the microphone. His marriage to Dixie Lee [and his subsequent family] was seen to have a sobering influence on his lifestyle, but only after a temporary separation. Thereafter the documentary concentrated on his meteoric rise to fame through radio, films and records, and especially his association with the Decca chief, Jack Kapp, to whom Bing referred as his Svengali.

The acceleration of the programme mirrored Bing's own unstoppable and increasing popularity as excerpts from his many films and records overlaid the narrator's factual tributes. He became the "unofficial Voice Of America heard somewhere in the world every minute of every day." His bond raising, service camp sites and overseas fighting front tours were given considerable prominence, as was, on the lighter side, the classic teaming of Bing, Bob and Dottie in possibly the greatest comedy series of films of all time. The story of the film *Holiday Inn* and the unexpected success of "White Christmas" was given over to Bing to expand upon. He explained how it was a simplistic scene in the film; no one could have believed that it would be such a huge success. Conflicting reports on both Bing and Irving Berlin's comments at the time still leave the matter open. Though one would suspect that had the success been anticipated the song would have been afforded a more grandiose production within the movie as was the case with the song's reincarnation on screen in 1954.

Then *Going My Way*: another enigma. "They were very brave casting me as a priest. I'd been a crooner, a sportsman, a race track habitué. It was Leo McCarey's idea. He'd had brilliant successes before that, and that's always been my axiom; if you get in the hands of a great director that has a great track record you do whatever he says. So I went ahead and did it." That it swept the board at the 1944 Oscar Ceremony is well documented, and Bing, with his usual trademark modesty, was seen accepting the statuette from his friend Gary Cooper. Reminiscing about the event Bing dismissed the achievement by suggesting it was a charming picture, well directed with everyone away at the war. "I just played Bing Crosby." Though was to add: "I don't want to be wallowing in humility, I'm just trying to be truthful."

The Magnetophon / Ampex project, sponsored by Bing's company, features prominently in documentaries about him these days. The significance of this, for the times, remarkable invention was given the prominence it deserved. It would have always happened, of course. But that Bing realised it's huge potential so early on is a credit to his perspicacity. And more time available for shooting and golf was not an inconsiderable factor! In fact hardly a minute of the programme passed without there being a shot or two of him participating in his favourite outdoor activity.

The tragedy of Dixie's death during the shooting of *Little Boy Lost* was a sombre sequence, given brief coverage over the making of the film. Though sequences showing his courtship and marriage to Kathryn Grant barely illustrated the time lapse between the two events.

With excerpts from over fifteen films and some twenty songs it proved to be an entertaining and informative production, which may well have given a new insight into his life and times for those unacquainted with Bing's truly remarkable career. We can only hope that this kind of a documentary will in time dispel the rather sad, final minutes that were given over to a decline that all too often dilutes a lifetime's achievements and, if nothing is done about it, relegates a performer to an irrelevant has-been.

As his second family came along and with his break into television and the family Christmas shows, it became apparent that his popularity was waning among a growing generation. Rock and roll, and the continuing popularity of Frank Sinatra among Bing's contemporaries led to him being sidelined by the critics. The narrator, Ian McShane, was to say:

"In a New York Times millennial roundup of Twentieth Century pop music Bing failed even to make the top fifty. For a man who had brought black music to white audiences, pioneered a new style of singing and dominated American popular culture for thirty years this was a harsh judgment. Not that Bing would have cared."

"If you look at what I've done there's really nothing outstanding there to reflect about. No great performances. I have just an ordinary voice. Probably have a little style that distinguishes my singing from other people who sing. I think pretty near everybody who has an ear for music at all, that can carry a tune,

feels that really he could sing as good as I do if he was given an opportunity. And candidly I think he's darn near right."

But we know different.

LIVING FAMOUSLY – BING CROSBY

Screened on BBC2 on the afternoon of Thursday 23rd January, this second documentary mirrored a similar pattern to the Christmas Day telecast and followed on from a screening of *The Bells of St. Mary's*. It varied in style and personalities, but once again benefited from the inclusion of our own editor, Malcolm Macfarlane, Gary Giddins and Ken Barnes, all of whom, this time, were seen and heard, and are closely associated with the ICC of course. Which meant that accuracy of reportage was a keynote.

Interestingly, comedienne Caroline Quentin had been chosen as the lady narrator, and this distaff presentation may be a first for a Bing documentary. Whilst her script would have been prepared, her delivery conveyed cordial approval and recognition of the fact that her given subject was an entertainer of remarkable stature.

"Bing Crosby was one of the most popular singing stars of the Twentieth Century. His unique, relaxed singing style made his voice recognizable to generations." Such was her opening gambit spoken over images of Bing singing "I Surrender, Dear" from the Mack Sennett movie of the same name.

Gary Giddins picked up the baton with the words: "It's almost impossible to overstate the influence Crosby had", whence it passed to the UK's most popular and experienced film critic and reviewer Barry Norman, who weighed in with a remarkable tribute for a man not known to mince his words. "For five years in a row he was number one star at the box office, so you can't get a lot bigger than Bing Crosby. I can't think there is any contemporary that comes close. He was unique."

Malcolm related Bing's association with the Jesuits and the influence of his upbringing in that regard. This was also expanded upon by the Bing Crosby archivist Stephanie Plowman in their joint résumé of the Spokane – Gonzaga years which was in considerable contrast to the speakeasy year or two, the worst excesses of which might easily have deprived us of a supreme talent.

Tony Bennett was on hand to sing his praises, though not literally so; but with some gratifying reminders of Bing's style and influence delivered not with an unwelcome, sycophantic reverence but with that avuncular benevolence that befits an ageing performer who has seen it all and does not find it difficult to separate the meritorious from the mediocre.

The by now familiar pattern of this type of documentary unfolded, especially with the welcome contributions from Ken Barnes and guitarist Les Paul, both of whom were unstinting in praise and anecdotes to match the visuals. These included clever interpolation of vintage images that gave the impression of time and place to suit the subject: the Cocoanut Grove and Bing's radio broadcasts particularly.

Caroline cast an eye over the Road movies, Bing's dog collar days at Paramount, the remarkable role reversal in *The Country Girl* and the joyful, multi-talented casting of *High Society*, and while all these clips and contributions were most welcome the programme failed to deliver in the final minutes by almost totally ignoring Bing's comeback years. Especially the Ken Barnes albums and Palladium concerts. A brief glimpse of *Top Of The Pops* and a dramatic reference to the Pasadena accident was all there was in the broadcast before he was seen to take that final bow on a Spanish golf course.

It was left to his son and daughter to sum up a life that brought so much pleasure to more people than any other entertainer who has ever lived:

"He had a good round." "He died as a vital man, and as always his timing was impeccable."

THE MAGIC OF BING CROSBY

This equally nice tribute was screened on Sky's Performance channel on Tuesday 28th January, late evening. It was released on video some twelve years ago and was fully reviewed in this column in our 100th Edition. At that time the Warner Music Vision video subtitled it *Part One*, but there has been no subsequent issue, which has been disappointing. The three principle participants in this more musical documentary are Rosemary Clooney, Michael Feinstein and Kathryn Crosby, all telling their own story rather than narrating. It was nice to watch this again on TV, especially as older videos tend to creep to the back of the shelf and remain unviewed. Fifty-five minutes that are worth watching once more, or if you haven't got a copy read all about it in BING magazine April 1992.

? YOU'RE HERE, YOU'RE THERE, YOU'RE EV'RYWHERE ?

Saturday 2nd November 2002 and the National Lottery game show in the UK had two lady contestants saying they met Bing on a golf course. One of them was a lavatory cleaner who was cleaning the 'gents' when Bing entered and said; "Can you leave please as I want to take a leak." But before departing she acquired his autograph [what on, I wonder?] while Bing crooned "Moon River" to her all the way through! Bing's name cropped up just 20 minutes later as an option on the *Who Wants To be A Millionaire* programme when a contestant was asked what singer won an Oscar in the film *From Here To Eternity*. I make this his fifth appearance on the show.

From Steven Lewis via The Bing Crosby Internet Museum in late December came the following: "While y'all were busy flipping that radio dial in search of Bing singing "White Christmas" or shoveling the consequences of all that collective dreaming, Bing made a couple surprise appearances on network TV on Christmas Day. "Entertainment Tonight" did a profile of Bing that featured his widow's battle with MCA (which goes to court next month) and the venerable "Nightline" did a profile of the song "White Christmas" that featured a heavy dose of Santa Cros." Alias Mr. Christmas!

Last October, Bing popped up in no small measure in Ken Crossland's *On The Merseybeat* interview regarding his forthcoming book on Michael Holliday. Mike's adulation of Bing was reiterated and I'm sure

Ken's book will reflect this aspect of Michael's musical career. No doubt the book will be reviewed in this magazine when available. So look out for it.

For those of you in the States who have a radio station in your area that carries the syndicated series "When Radio Was" hosted by Stan Freberg, you might like to know that the complete Fred Allen Show from 23rd May 1948 with Bing as guest aired on Monday and Tuesday 17th and 18th February. In addition to hearing Bing, it was also a rare chance to hear one of radio's most successful comedians, Fred Allen, a man largely forgotten today. Keep a look out for further shows.

In response to my email, Ian Wyatt of BBC Essex early morning programmes replies: 'I think your aspirations of opening up Bing type music to a younger audience is definitely happening.' He played "Straight Down The Middle" at 6.15 a.m. especially for my birthday. I might add I was up, and ready to go to work!

As usual, Barnsey is reviewing our calendar and playing the selected songs as each month passes, and both Henry Ayrton and Russell Davies continue to play a few Bings with their equally knowledgeable background to each and every disc. Keith Fordyce regularly presents a double-bill Crosby Corner, and Mesdames Judith Ley and Christine Prentice are heavily into the Old Groaner these days. More on these, and other, helpful presenters and their selections when space allows.

SOUNDS NICE

One of the most popular features of this Shannonside Northern Sound FM radio programme in Ireland is *The Crosby Corner*, wherein presenter Eddie Murphy spins a couple of Bing tracks on each broadcast. Despite the local origin, a broad spectrum of Bing's recorded repertoire is played – though, as one would expect, a few songs with the Emerald Isle connection are included if only to please George O'Reilly, who was a guest on RTE Radio's *Rattlebag* programme wherein he took to task various Irish radio stations for neglecting Bing.

The most frequent record spins over the Christmas period came from the 'Holiday Inn / White Christmas' CD, and several presenters gave away copies as prizes in quizzes based on the contents. With a change in some of the original artistes from the films for contractual reasons, this made for some intriguing questions.

Finally, to encourage a greater listening base this column would like to include, on an occasional basis, details of where to find presenters of our kind of music in the UK (and in the USA if this practical). For example Paul Barnes with *Gold For Grown Ups* can be found weekends, Sunday 6 – 9 p.m. on:

Norfolk 95.1 and 104.4 FM Cambs. 95.7 and 96.0 FM Northants 103.6 and 104.2 FM Suffolk 95.5, 103.9 and 104.6 FM BBC Three Counties 103.8, 104.5 and 95.5 FM Essex 95.3 and 103.5 FM

Look for Christine Prentice with *String Of Pearls* on BBC GMR 95.1 & 104.6 FM Sundays 1pm – 2.30pm

Henry Ayrton's *Real Music Show,* Thursday evenings 19:05 - 22:00, comprising "Swing Into Romance" at 19:05, "Roots & Branches of Rock 'n' Roll" at 20:05 & "Folk and Roots" at 21:05. *Edged In Blue,* Sunday evenings, 20:05 - 21:00. *Northern Blues,* Sunday evenings 21:05 - 22:00.

All the above on BBC Radios Humberside, Leeds & Sheffield and on BBC North Yorkshire & Radio York.

BBC Radio Humberside 95.9 FM; 1485 MW BBC Radio Leeds 92.4, 95.3, 102.7 & 103.9 FM; 774 MW

BBC Radio Sheffield 88.6, 94.7 & 104.1 FM; 1035 MW BBC Radio North Yorkshire 103.7 (York), 95.5 & 104.3 (Harrogate) FM; 1260 MW (Scarborough).

Nationally broadcast programmes are easy enough to track down, but members are requested to let this column know of their own regional wavelengths not mentioned here.

Bert Bishop, February 2003

(Editor: A lot has been happening and our thanks to Bert for summarising it so thoroughly. It must be very frustrating for those outside the UK to read of the two new Bing documentaries transmitted by the BBC and let's hope that the programmes are picked up by enterprising TV stations and / or video copies find their way out of the UK. Incidentally, the 'Living Famously' show included some very nice, sincere contributions from Harry Crosby and his sister, Mary. How good it was to see them talking so fondly about their father.

Bert Bishop has been a Bing follower for a very long time but can he match the record of Pat Forster? Let's read what she has to say.)

It Was a Great Time!

As one of the older UK members, now 83, I have been asked to write recalling the coming of Bing on the scene in the early 1930s.

I was living in South London with my parents and brother and sister. They were twins and eleven years older than me. This age gap was a great advantage to me. They introduced me to the world of books and entertainment so I became mature for my age. My brother was one of the original "Wireless Hams" and made his own sets.

To get a new station was his great delight, and we listened to Radio Hilversum and Luxembourg, so I heard all the current dance bands.

My sister's interest was opera, but I thought this singing was ludicrous and incomprehensible. My great love was films, especially Westerns even in those days before John Wayne. So when she told me one Saturday we were going to see the new singer who had become all the rage in America I was disappointed. The year was 1933, the film "College Humour". To say I was stunned and enthralled would be the understatement of the century! Here was a kind of singer I never knew existed. He was short and chubby, he sat on the edge of a desk swinging his legs, teaching the class to "Learn to Croon". When telling his girl he loved her, he sat beside her instead of standing and declaiming at the top of his voice. Above all, I could understand the words, and he made singing seem <u>fun</u>, not to be taken too seriously, with his infectious grin!

When I got home I wanted to know all about Bing, even the name was different. When told I could buy his records, I spent all my pocket money that week, 6d, on my first record, "The Last Roundup!" - a western.

From then on, Bing became the great phenomenon

of the age. He was omnipresent on films, radio and records. Christopher Stone, the original disc-jockey had regular programmes devoted to him on Radio Luxembourg. Composers wrote of him in current songs, singers copied him. Even the publicity "blurb" that his voice was heard every minute of the day somewhere in the world seemed believable.

When war broke out in Europe in 1939, he was world famous. It was said Roosevelt's favourite song was "Home on the Range" and Churchill's "You are My Sunshine". During the Blitz the BBC broadcast daily a programme of his records from 7.15 a.m. to 7.30 a.m. to coincide with the sounding of the all-clear, to cheer people up after a bad night.

When American troops were cut-off without hope of relief in the Pacific they asked for a Crosby record to be relayed to them as a last request.

When Bing eventually came to London in 1944, the headlines read "He's here! Bing has arrived" and he was mobbed wherever he went despite the flying bombs.

When the Japs surrendered in 1945, one American general present said it only needed Crosby to be there to sing, to make the occasion perfect.

Looking back, despite a world depression followed by the war, it was a great time. It was the Golden Age of entertainment and the Arts. There were wonderful films and stars, fabulous shows and plays, great orchestras and bands playing the music of great composers.

I am so lucky to have lived through it all.

Pat Forster

ONCE IN A WHILE

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Eddie Bracken, died last November at the age of 87. A distinctive comedy actor who specialised in portraying affable bumblers, Eddie Bracken had a successful film career as a Paramount star in the Forties, and will be particularly remembered for his work in two classic comedies by the writer-director Preston Sturges, *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1943) and *Hail the Conquering Hero* (1943). Paramount had signed Bracken to a contract in 1941, and he became a staple of their comedies and musicals, his films including *Caught in the Draft* (1941) with Bob Hope. *The Fleet's In* (1942) was the first of several films in which he appeared with Betty Hutton. In *Out of This World* (1945), a satire on the craze for Sinatra, he had one of his best roles as a crooner who has teenagers swooning and his singing in the film was, as we know, dubbed by Bing. He also appeared in two other films with Bing, *Star Spangled Rhythm* (1942) and *Duffy's Tavern* (1945) as well guesting on Bing's *Kraft Music Hall* on three occasions in the early 1940s. Bracken's trademark style of guileless incompetence was beginning to pall by the end of the decade when his contract ended, but he had good supporting roles in the musicals *Summer Stock* (1950) and *Two Tickets to Broadway* (1951). When film roles became scarce, he acted on television (notably in the series *Masquerade Party* in the 1950s and later in *Rawhide* and *Murder, She Wrote*) and developed a love of repertory theatre, appearing in touring productions of Broadway hits, including *The Seven Year Itch, The Odd Couple, Hello, Dolly* and *Damn Yankees.*

Adolph Green, a lyricist whose six-decade collaboration with Betty Comden helped create such joyous stage celebrations of New York as "On the Town" and "Wonderful Town" as well as the classic movie musical *Singin' in the Rain*, died on October 23, 2002. He was 87. On Broadway, Comden and Green (the billing was always alphabetical) worked most successfully with composers Leonard Bernstein, Jule Styne and Cy Coleman. The duo wrote lyrics and often the books for more than a dozen shows, many of them built around such stars as Rosalind Russell, Judy Holliday, Phil Silvers, Carol Burnett and Lauren Bacall. Their best lyrics were brash and buoyant, full of quick wit, best exemplified by "New York, New York," an exuberant and forthright hymn to their favorite city. Yet the songwriters' biggest pop hits — "The Party's Over," "Just in Time" and "Make Someone Happy" — were simple, direct and heartfelt. On film, their most celebrated work was the screenplay for *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). In 1953, they had another film hit with *The Band Wagon,* starring Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse. That same year, Comden and Green reunited with Bernstein on Broadway for "Wonderful Town," a musical version of "My Sister Eileen." Bing's link with Adolph Green comes from his 1953 recordings of two of the songs from "Wonderful Town" - "Ohio" and "A Quiet Girl".

Arvell Shaw, the bassist who played with Louis Armstrong longer than any other musician, died on December 5, 2002 at age 79. Shaw, a St. Louis native, joined Louis at the age of 22, fresh from serving in the Navy during World War II, after filling in for another bassist during a three-week engagement in St. Louis. His dependable, swinging basslines were a natural fit for the flamboyant Satchmo sound and he played with him until Armstrong's last performance, in 1971. After Armstrong's death, Shaw formed the Louis Armstrong Legacy Band, which played regular gigs around the country and put out several recordings. Shaw performed on all the records Armstrong made from 1945 until 1971 as well as having roles with him in seven movies, including *The Glenn Miller Story*, starring James Stewart and of course *High Society,* when Bing introduced him during the wonderful "Now You Has Jazz" number.

Mary Brian, a film star and memorable ingénue who bridged the silent and early sound eras, died on December 30 in Del Mar, California at the age of 96. Between *Peter Pan* in 1924 and *Dragnet* in 1947, Ms. Brian appeared in 82 films. Petite, with blue-gray eyes and dark-brown curls, she was one of Hollywood's romantic leading ladies from the mid-1920's through the late 30's. Among her films still shown at film festivals and on television is one of the earliest western talkies, *The Virginian,* from 1929, with Gary Cooper as the title character and Walter Huston as the villain. Easily

navigating the changeover to sound, she appeared in two 1931 evergreens, George Cukor's *Royal Family of Broadway* and Lewis Milestone's *Front Page*. She played W. C. Fields's daughter in several films, including *The Man on the Flying Trapeze* (1935). Among her other movies of the 1930's were *Shadows of Sing Sing, College Rhythm, Charlie Chan in Paris* and *Navy Blues.* She appeared as herself in *Hollywood on Parade No. 9* (1933) and *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove* (1934) and in this latter film she was featured with Bing. Her other major involvement with Bing came in 1933 when she was said to have auditioned via a 3000-mile leased wire to New York for a proposed new Chesterfield show for CBS with Bing and Richard Arlen. However there were no further developments because of the high weekly line charges from Los Angeles to New York.

Doris Fisher, the composer whose steady stream of hit songs in the 1940s included "You Always Hurt the One You Love," died after a brief illness on January 15. She was 87. Born in New York City, Doris Fisher came from a musical family. She and her father Fred wrote "Whispering Grass" which was a hit for the Ink Spots in 1940. In 1944, Doris began a collaboration with lyricist Allan Roberts and wrote hits performed by Billie Holiday, Louis Prima, and Bing and the Andrews Sisters. Among them was "Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall" by Ella Fitzgerald and the Ink Spots. The Mills Brothers performed "You Always Hurt the One You Love." and Bing committed to wax "Good. Good, Good" (with the Andrews Sisters), "Prove It By The Things You Do" and "You Sang My Love Song to Somebody Else". Doris went on to write music for a number of movies, including *Gilda* in 1946, which starred Rita Hayworth and featured the song "Put the Blame on Mame." She left the music industry in 1949 to marry Charles Gershenson.

Norman Panama, who collaborated with Melvin Frank on such films as *White Christmas, Road to Utopia* and *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*, died at the age of 88 on January 13 at UCLA Medical Center from complications of Parkinson's disease. Born in Chicago in 1914, Panama was studying law and political science at the University of Chicago when he met Frank. The two decided to break into the entertainment industry because Frank already had written a novel and Panama had dabbled in playwriting. They arrived in Hollywood in 1938 and began writing sketches for Bob Hope's radio show. The writing team eventually left the show to work for comedian Phil Baker and singer Rudy Vallee before signing with Paramount Pictures after writing an original story treatment for Hope that became the 1942 comedy *My Favorite Blonde.* The team's screenwriting earned them three Oscar nominations for *Road to Utopia, Knock on Wood* and *The Facts of Life.* Among the other films Frank and Panama wrote were *The Court Jester* and *That Certain Feeling.* Frank and Panama produced and co-wrote the book for the 1956 Broadway musical "Li'l Abner," and also produced the less successful 1959 film version, which Frank directed. In 1966, after working together for nearly 30 years, Frank and Panama amicably broke up as a team. Panama directed Bob Hope and Bing in *The Road to Hong Kong* and Hope and Jackie Gleason in *How to Commit a Marriage.*

Nadine Conner, a soprano, who performed for nearly two decades at the Metropolitan Opera, died in March. She was 96. Conner debuted at the Met in 1941 as Pamina in Mozart's "The Magic Flute," conducted by Bruno Walter. She performed there 249 times over 18 seasons. Conner began her career singing on national radio from Los Angeles and she appeared with Bing on his *Kraft Music Hall* show on December 17, 1936. She also worked with Gordon MacRae and toured with film star Nelson Eddy.

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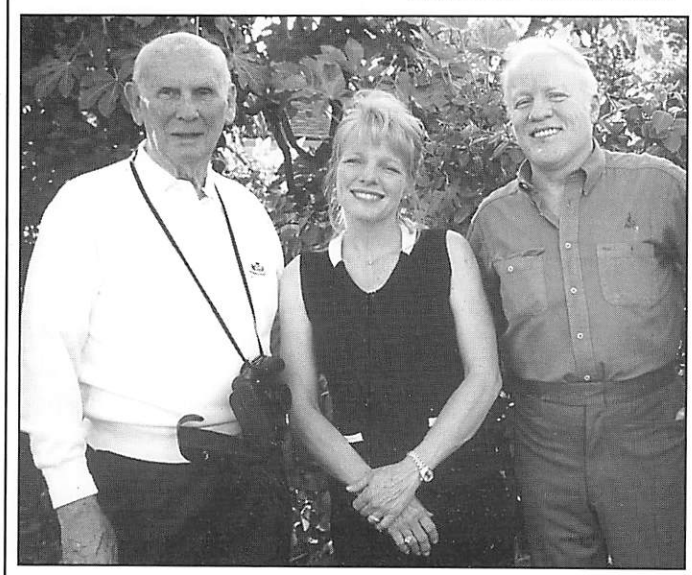
Charlie Baillie

It was with great sadness that I learned of the death of my friend and avid Crosby fan, CHARLIE BAILLIE, who passed away on November 15 after having suffered a massive stroke. Charlie had left the house at 6:30 a.m. to meet his regular golf partner for their 7:00 a.m. game and just outside the club, he suffered a massive cerebral haemorrhage, collapsed and died within 36 hours. He always said that, like Bing, he would like to die on the golf course. He almost made it.

Charlie was buried near his late wife, Helene, in South Bend, Indiana. My wife, Pat, and I visited Charlie and his second wife, Nancy, twice at their home in Arcadia, Los Angeles and you could not have met nicer people. Nancy and Charlie had enjoyed 20 happy years of marriage following the loss of their first partners. A childhood friend commented that Charles was always #1 in everything that he did from grade school through Harvard Business School and on through his professional career as a banker. He was an avid Dodger baseball fan and a golfer who had three holes in one to his name. Charlie contributed CD reviews and other material to several Crosby magazines over the years and he was always helpful and obliging in his dealings with other Crosby fans.

Charlie was a kind and gentle human being and we shall miss him.

Malcolm Macfarlane



Charlie Baillie with Phillip Crosby and Phillip's daughter, Dixie, in 1999.

Keeping Track

Bing Crosby: A Centennial Anthology Of His Decca Recordings MCA-Universal 088-113-222-2 USA

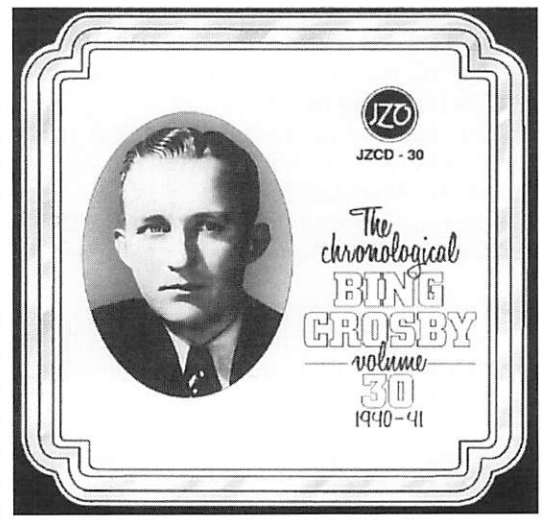
CD1: 1. I Surrender Dear (1939) 2. Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams (1939) 3. Stardust (1939) 4. I Found a Million Dollar Baby (1940) 5. Please (1940) 6. Where the Blue of the Night (1945) 7. I'm an Old Cowhand 8. New San Antonio Rose 9. Pistol Packin' Mama (with the Andrews Sisters) 10. Don't Fence Me In (with the Andrews Sisters) 11. Sweet Leilani 12. Blue Hawaii 13. My Isle of Golden Dreams 14. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (1945) 15. McNamara's Band 16. Galway Bay 17. Wait Till the Sun Shines Nellie (with Mary Martin) 18. Road to Morocco (with Bob Hope) 19. South America Take it Away (with the Andrews Sisters) 20. A Couple of Song and Dance Men (with Fred Astaire) 21. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Al Jolson) 22. In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening (with Jane Wyman) 23. You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby 24. Yes Indeed (with Connee Boswell) 25. South Rampart Street Parade (with the Andrews Sisters)

CD2: 1. June in January 2. Pennies from Heaven 3. I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams 4. Moonlight Becomes You 5. Sunday Monday or Always 6. Swinging on a Star 7. The Bells of St. Mary's 8. Blue Skies 9. It's Been a Long Long Time 10. I Can't Begin to Tell You 11. Ol' Man River (1955) 12. You Are My Sunshine 13. San Fernando Valley 14. Sioux City Sue 15. Dear Hearts and Gentle People 16. Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy 17. Jingle Bells (with the Andrews Sisters) 18. I'll Be Home for Christmas 19. Silent Night (1947) 20. White Christmas (1947) 21. Red Sails in the Sunset 22. Now is the Hour 23. Far Away Places 24. Harbor Lights 25. Around the World

As mentioned by Wig in his article "Bing in the USA", this 2-CD set will be released on April 8th. It looks to be a very well balanced and prestigious compilation for the general public and further details will appear in the Summer issue of BING. Price $29.98 but available for $24.99 from some outlets.

The Chronological Bing Crosby Vol. 30 Jonzo Records JZCD 30 UK
December 30, 1940 - June 16, 1941

1. Chapel In The Valley 2. I Only Want A Buddy, Not A Sweetheart (A) * 3. I Only Want A Buddy, Not A Sweetheart (composite take) * 4. I Only Want A Buddy, Not A Sweetheart (reject) * 5. When Day Is Done 6. My Buddy 7. Who Calls? 8. Brahms' Lullaby (Cradle Song) 9. You And I * 10. Be Honest With Me 11. Goodbye, Little Darlin', Goodbye (A) 12. Goodbye, Little Darlin', Goodbye (B) * 13. The Waiter And The Porter And The Upstairs Maid (with Mary Martin & Jack Teagarden) 14. Birth Of The Blues 15. Clementine 16. The Old Oaken Bucket 17. (Lights Out) 'Til Reveille 18. Sweetheart Of Sigma Chi (rehearsal) * 19. Sweetheart Of Sigma Chi 20. Sweetly She Sleeps, My Alice Fair * 21. Dream Girl Of Pi KA * 22. I Wonder What's Become Of Sally? * 23. Old Black Joe * 24. Mary's A Grand Old Name



* = new to CD

The latest issues from the Jonzo stable and as usual we have some rare songs with Bing's voice at its best. No less than ten tracks are new to CD and there are others which have only appeared occasionally in digital form. I am particularly pleased to have the three Stephen Foster songs on these CDs as I have always liked Bing's versions. It is worth clarifying the status of the three versions of "I Only Want A Buddy, Not A Sweetheart", a song which does not impress John McNicholas, as you will read in his notes. Track 2 contains the issued take. Track 3 is a version comprising the first half of the issued take with an alternative final chorus dedicated to Mr. & Mrs. Sam Weller of Honolulu. Track 4 is a genuine alternative take but with Bing adding what appear to be lyrics from "Three Letters" and some impromptu criticism of the song at the very end. The running time of the CD is 69 minutes.

The Chronological Bing Crosby Vol. 31 Jonzo Records JZCD 31 UK
July 5, 1941 - July 30, 1941

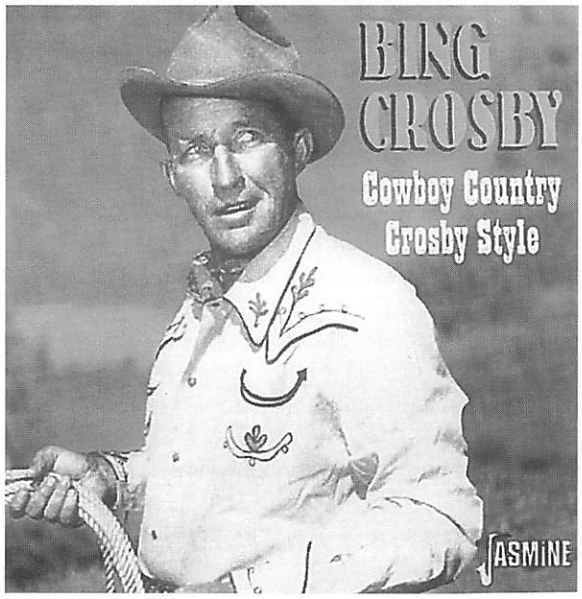
1. Oh, How I Miss You Tonight 2. Don't Break The Spell 3. Dear Little Boy Of Mine * 4. Nell And I (A) * 5. Nell And I (B) * 6. Danny Boy 7. Where The Turf Meets The Surf (A) * 8. Where The Turf Meets The Surf (B) * 9. You Are My Sunshine 10. Ridin' Down The Canyon 11. Flores Negras (You're The Moment Of A Lifetime) * 12. No Te Importe Saber (Let Me Love You Tonight) (A) * 13. No Te Importe Saber (Let Me Love You Tonight) (B) * 14. Ol' Man River (A) * 15. Ol' Man River (B) * 16. Day Dreaming 17. Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup 18. The Anniversary Waltz 19. Let's All Meet At My House (with Muriel Lane) 20. Humpty Dumpty Heart 21. The Whistler's Mother-In-Law (with Muriel Lane) (A) 22. The Whistler's Mother-In-Law (with Muriel Lane) (B) * 23. The Whistler's Mother-In-Law (with Muriel Lane) (C) * 24. I Ain't Got Nobody

* = new to CD

There will be those who will baulk at three versions of 'The Whistler's Mother-In-Law' but completeness is what the series is all about and all credit to the producer for staying faithful to his concept. How wonderful to have another twelve songs new to CD and in good quality too albeit that there appears to be more surface noise than usual this time. We have almost run out of

superlatives for this series but these CDs really are a 'must' for the serious Crosby collector. Again our thanks are due to John McNicholas for a great job. Running time: 67 minutes.

Jonzo albums 30 and 31 are only obtainable in the UK and the rest of Europe from Jonzo Records, PO Box 212, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 7LD, UK. Price £10.70 each postpaid (or both for £21.10). Cheques to be made payable to Jonzo Records.



Bing Crosby - Cowboy Country Crosby Style
Jasmine JASMCD 3557 UK

1. Country Style 2. Ridin' Down The Canyon 3. Who Calls? 4. My Little Buckaroo 5. Ride, Tenderfoot, Ride (KMH, July 21, 1938) 6. Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love (L4184) 7. Blue Shadows On The Trail* 8. Nobody's Darlin' But Mine * 9. Empty Saddles (soundtrack) 10. Silver On The Sage (KMH, June 30, 1938) 11. You Are My Sunshine 12. Roundup Lullaby (soundtrack) 13. Don't Fence Me In (KMH, December 14, 1944) 14. Lone Star Trail 15. Mule Train 16. Prairieland Lullaby 17. Home On The Range (KMH, April 24, 1941) 18. You Don't Know What Lonesome Is* 19. Tumbling Tumbleweeds (KMH, March 14, 1940) 20. Take Me Back To My Boots And Saddle 21. The Last Round-Up
* = new to CD

Our old friend Geoff Milne has put together an excellent collection of Bing singing cowboy songs utilising commercial tracks, radio cuts and film soundtracks. The CD displays Bing's voice at his best and there is a nice bright sound throughout albeit with some slight surface noise on the odd track. Geoff has written short descriptive sleeve notes and as always he has shown first class judgement in selecting the tracks for our enjoyment. I really like Bing singing this type of song and I heartily recommend it to all concerned. Running time: 64 minutes. Price: £6.99 in the UK, around $12 in the USA. A Volume 2 is scheduled to follow fairly soon but in the meantime here are some more CDs from the Jasmine / Geoff Milne stable.

Bing Crosby & Bob Hope **Jasmine JASCD 127/8** **UK**
Hit The Road with Bing & Bob - From Bali To Zanzibar - Original Film Soundtracks - featuring Dorothy Lamour
CD1
ROAD TO SINGAPORE
1. Introduction 2. Captain Custard - with Bob Hope 3. The Moon & the Willow Tree - Dorothy Lamour 4. Sweet Potato Piper 5. Carry Me Back to Old Virginny - Jerry Colonna 6. Too Romantic - with Dorothy Lamour 7. Too Romantic 8. Finale
ROAD TO ZANZIBAR
9. Introduction / You Lucky People, You 10. African Etude - with chorus 11. You're Dangerous - Dorothy Lamour 12. It's Always You 13. It's Always You- with Bob Hope & Dorothy Lamour 14. Finale
ROAD TO MOROCCO
15. Introduction - with Bob Hope 17. Ain't Got A Dime To My Name 18. Constantly - Dorothy Lamour 19. Moonlight Becomes You 20. Moonlight Becomes You - with Bob Hope & Dorothy Lamour 21. Finale
CD2
ROAD TO UTOPIA
1. Introduction 2. Goodtime Charlie - with Bob Hope 3. It's Anybody's Spring 4. Personality - Dorothy Lamour 5. Welcome To My Dream 6. Put It There, Pal - with Bob Hope 7. Would You? - Dorothy Lamour 8. Welcome To My Dream
ROAD TO RIO
9. Introduction 10. Apalachicola, FLA. - with Bob Hope 11. But Beautiful 12. You Don't Have To Know The Language - with The Andrews Sisters 13. Experience - Dorothy Lamour 14. Batuque Nio Morro - with Hope and Carioca Boys 15. Finale
ROAD TO BALI
16. Introduction 17. Chicago Style - with Bob Hope 18. The Whiffenpoof Song - with Bob Hope 19. Moonflowers - Dorothy Lamour 20. Hoot Mon - with Bob Hope 21. To See You Is To Love You 22. The Merry-Go-Runaround - with Bob Hope & Dorothy Lamour 23. Moonflowers - Dorothy Lamour 24. Finale

As the title implies, these are songs from the actual soundtracks of the first six Road films. Scheduled to be released before Bing's centenary, this has been put together by Geoff Milne too. Somehow these songs from the films themselves are so reminiscent of the fun in those celluloid frolics. Informative sleeve notes include the following gem which was completely new to me:

"On a note of interest: on the Paramount lot at the same time as the 'Road' crew, Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra were filming ***"Las Vegas Nights"***, so Bing persuaded them to accompany him on his opening song "You Lucky People, You".

You learn something every day! Both CDs run for 51minutes.

Bing Crosby - Going Hollywood Vol. 4: 1944-1949 **Jasmine** **UK**
CD1
1. Moonlight Becomes You (L3034-A, edited) 2. That Old Black Magic (film soundtrack) 3. Let's Take The Long Way Home * 4. Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive (film s/t - with Sonny Tufts) 5. I Promise You (film s/t - with Betty Hutton) 6. Out of This World (film s/t) 7. I'd Rather Be Me 8. June Comes Around Every Year 9. Swinging on a Star (parody - film s/t with Cass Daley, Betty Hutton, Dorothy Lamour, Diana Lynn, Robert Benchley, Billy de Wolfe and others) 10. Aren't You Glad You're You 11. Adeste Fideles (L3025-A) 12. O Sanctissima (film s/t) 13. In the Land of Beginning Again (film s/t) 14. The Bells of St. Mary's 15. I've Got My Captain Working For Me Now (film s/t with Billy de Wolfe) 16. I'm Putting All My Eggs In One Basket /

Cheek to Cheek (film s/t) 17. All By Myself (film s/t) 18. I'll See You In C-U-B-A (film s/t - with Olga San Juan) 19. A Couple of Song & Dance Men (with Fred Astaire) 20. You Keep Coming Back Like a Song 21. What'll I Do / All Alone / Remember (film s/t) 22. Blue Skies (film s/t) 23. The Little Things In Life / Not For All The Rice In China / Russian Lullaby (film s/t) 24. Everybody Step 25. How Deep Is The Ocean (film s/t) 26. Say It Isn't So (film s/t) 27. Getting Nowhere (film s/t) 28. Any Bonds Today / This Is The Army, Mr. Jones / White Christmas / God Bless America (film s/t)

CD2

1. Smile Right Back At The Sun 2. Country Style 3. My Heart Is A Hobo * 4. As Long As I'm Dreaming 5. Harmony (film s/t) 6. Friendly Mountains (film s/t) 7. I Kiss Your Hand Madame (film s/t) 8. The Kiss In Your Eyes 9. Get Yourself a Phonograph (film s/t) 10. Emperor Waltz * 11. The Whistler & His Dog (film s/t) 12. Apalachicola, FLA / Swanee River / Carry Me Back To Old Virginny (film s/t) 13. But Beautiful 14. You Don't Have To Know The Language (with the Andrews Sisters) 15. For What? (Philco, June 18, 1947) 16. Batuque Nio Morro (with the Carioca Boys - film s/t) 17. If You Stub Your Toe On The Moon (film s/t) 18. Once & For Always (with Rhonda Fleming, L4720-A) 19. Busy Doing Nothing 20. Top O' The Morning 21. When Irish Eyes Are Smiling 22. Kitty of Coleraine (film s/t) 23. The Donovans (with Barry Fitzgerald & Ann Blyth, film s/t) 24. You're In Love With Someone * 25. Oh, 'Tis Sweet To Think 26. Top O' The Morning (film s/t) * = new to CD

The latest from Geoff Milne's series, this 2-CD set should also be released before the centenary. I've not heard it yet but it looks to be an absolutely superb issue. All commercial tracks except where marked and several of these are new to CD. Running times: CD1: 73 minutes CD2: 70 minutes.

Bing Crosby - Swinging on a Star **Pure Gold GO 793932** **The Netherlands**

1. Swinging On A Star 2. Deep In the Heart Of Texas 3. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Al Jolson) 4. Blue Hawaii 5. Pennies From Heaven 6. San Antonio Rose 7. A Gal In Calico 8. Don't Fence Me In (with Andrews Sisters) 9. Gone Fishin' (with Louis Armstrong) 10. A Little Bird Told Me (radio) 11. I Kiss Your Hand Madame (1947) 12. Is You Is Or Is You Ain't ? (with Andrews Sisters) 13. Now Is The Hour 14. Pistol Packin' Mama (with Andrews Sisters) 15. Stardust (1931) 16. I'll Be Seeing You 17. Too Romantic 18. You Belong To My Heart 19. In the Cool, Cool, Cool, Of The Evening (with Jane Wyman) 20. Ac-Cent-Tchuate The Positive (with Andrews Sisters)

I am becoming confused by CDs with this title as this is at least the eighth so named. However this is a nice selection put out by Disky Communications of The Netherlands. Track 10 is the rare Bing solo from the Bob Hope Show of December 7, 1948. Recommended retail price $12.49 but Ernest Sutkowski picked this up from Tower Records for $7.99.

A Christmas Story **Drive Entertainment PUR1214** **USA**

How Lovely is Christmas - An Axe, An Apple and a Buckskin Jacket - Boy at a Window - Young Jethro Swung His Might Axe - Johnny Appleseed - Incident on Roger's Creek - How Lovely is Christmas (reprise)

Yes, this is Bing's 1957 story about young Jethro's adventures on Christmas Eve. The first time on CD, wonderful quality and reasonably priced at $5.99. The CD cover states that the album was directed by Mitch Miller although learned debate some years ago suggested that this was incorrect. Drive Entertainment, Inc. are handling the re-release of the original Golden Records Library which was originally developed by Simon & Schuster in association with Western Publishing, owner of Golden Books. The company issued "Jack B. Nimble" a year or so back and it's a pity that they didn't amalgamate the two stories on the one CD in view of the short running time of 21 minutes Perhaps the stories appeal to different markets. We look forward to the other Bing stories for children being issued on this label in due course.

The Golden Years of Bing Crosby **Soho SOHOCD014** **UK**

Disc One

1. Moonlight Becomes You 2. People Will Say We're In Love (with Trudy Erwin) 3. Swinging On A Star 4. I Love You (Porter) 5. I'll Be Seeing You 6. Don't Fence Me In (with the Andrews Sisters) 7. McNamara's Band 8. The Whippenpoof Song 9. Far Away Places 10. Dear Hearts And Gentle People 11. It's Easy To Remember 12. At Your Command 13. Dinah (with the Mills Brothers) 14. Brother, Can You Spare A Dime? 15. You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me 16. Love In Bloom 17. Soon 18. I'm An Old Cowhand 19. Pennies From Heaven 20. Sweet Leilani

Disc Two

1. White Christmas (1947) 2. Now Is The Hour 3. Galway Bay 4. South America, Take It Away (with the Andrews Sisters) 5. Home On The Range (1939) 6. Tumbling Tumbleweeds 7. Along The Santa Fe Trail 8. Clementine 9. The Way You Look Tonight (with Dixie Lee) 10. A Fine Romance (with Dixie Lee) 11. Basin Street Blues (with Connie Boswell) 12. Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider 13. Wait Till The Sun Shines, Nellie (with Mary Martin) 14. Mr Meadowlark (with Johnny Mercer) 15. Too Marvellous For Words 16. I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams 17. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Al Jolson) 18. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby 19. Silent Night (1947) 20. Sierra Sue

Disc Three

1. I Can't Begin To Tell You 2. Amor, Amor 3. Pistol Packin' Mama (with the Andrews Sisters) 4. Only Forever 5. An Apple For The Teacher (with Connie Boswell) 6. June In January 7. Ridin' Down The Canyon 8. Deep In The Heart Of Texas 9. St Louis Blues 10. Shine 11. Small Fry (with Johnny Mercer) 12. Start The Day Right (with Connie Boswell) 13. Out Of Nowhere 14. Just One More Chance 15. The Shadow Waltz 16. The Moon Got In My Eyes 17. Trade Winds 18. Be Careful, It's In My Heart 19. Sunday, Monday or Always 20. It's Been A Long, Long, Time

This 3-CD set comes in an outer slipcase and contains a 12 page booklet packed with photos, information and nice accurate liner notes by Joseph Adair. Nothing new to CD but an interesting mixture of Bing's great songs. In the USA, Amazon are selling it for $18.98. UK price £9.99. The set is issued by Union Square Music, Unit 2, The Grand Office Park, Packet Boat Lane, Cowley, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2GH, UK (Tel: +44 (0) 1895 458515, Fax: +44 (0) 1895 458516, E-mail: info@unionsquaremusic.co.uk) and contact them if you have problems in obtaining it.

Bing Sings **Planet Media PML1092** **UK**

1. Goodnight Sweetheart 2. It's Easy to Remember 3. Moonlight Becomes You 4. Pennies from Heaven 5. Brother, Can You

Spare a Dime? 6. Sweet Leilani 7. Don't Be That Way 8. How Deep Is the Ocean? 9. White Christmas 10. You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby 11. You're Getting to Be a Habit with Me 12. Sweet Georgia Brown 13. Only Forever 14. On the Sentimental Side 15. Too Marvellous for Words 16. Try a Little Tenderness 17. Stardust 18. Don't Fence Me In (with the Andrews Sisters) 19. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (That's an Irish Lullaby) 20. I'm an Old Cowhand (From the Rio Grande)
Another compilation which might attract the "man in the street." Reasonably priced at £4.99

The Golden Age of Comedy **Pulse PLSCD627** **UK**
Due to be issued on April 28. Bing and Bob Hope. Details awaited. Advertised at £4.99 on Amazon UK.

Guest Appearances and others

The Bell Sisters: The Bermuda Girls: **Jasmine JASCD634** **UK**
The Original Hits & Lots More Fun
CD2. June Night - Wheel of Fortune - Poor Whip-Poor-Will - Zing a Little Zong - Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie
The Bell Sisters had big hits in the USA with the songs 'Bermuda' and 'Wheel of Fortune' in 1952. Cynthia (then aged 16) and Kay (11) went on to appear on six occasions on Bing's radio show and the first 18 tracks on CD2 include all the performances on Bing's show including the duets listed above. The banter between the Sisters and Bing is delightful. This 2-CD set also features the Sisters' many recordings as well as duets with other artists such as Phil Harris (with whom they had a hit with 'Hambone', also in 1952), Gary Crosby and Spike Jones. The original RCA demo of 'Bermuda' is also included as are other unissued tracks. The excellent liner notes are written by the Sisters' nephew, Rex Strother, who compiled the album. Geoff Milne (who else?) handled the transfers. So what happened to the Bell Sisters? They dropped out of show business and both became teachers, married and raised families. Last year the sisters were aged 67 and 62 and they live happily. They both say that they owe the greatest debt in furthering their career to Bing and Bob Hope for having them on their shows on many occasions. A charming album. Running time of each CD: 66 minutes. Price $18.98 (US), £9.99 (UK).

The Golden Age Of The Andrews Sisters **Jasmine JASBOX 7-4** **UK**
Disc 1:
Yodelin' Jive - Pistol Packin' Mama - Victory Polka - Is You Is, Or Is You Ain't My Baby? - Hot Time In The Town Of Berlin - Don't Fence Me In
Disc 2:
Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive - The Three Caballeros - Along The Navajo Trail - South America Take It Away - Tallahassee - Quicksilver - Sparrow In The Treetop
A very nice 4-CD box set with a total of 101 of the Andrews Sisters unmistakable songs. Bing features on 13 of the tracks and overall this is very good value at £15.99. Jasmine continue to do a great job in catering for our kind of music.

Peggy Lee - Classics & Collectables **Universal 1130342** **UK**
The Merry-Go-Run-Around - Little Jack Frost Get Lost - The Moon Came Up With a Great Idea Last Night
A 2-CD set containing 48 of Peggy Lee's songs from her time with Decca Records (1952-56) including three of her duets with Bing. Running time: CD1: 77 minutes, CD2: 76 minutes.

The Ultimate Collection, Tommy & Jimmy Dorsey **JSP Records JSPCD912** **UK**
Disc C - Together, With Friends
Let's Do It (January 26, 1929) - The Spell Of The Blues - I Wished On The Moon - My Kinda Love (January 26, 1929) - I've Got The World On A String
A 4-CD collection selling for £20 or $30 which contains the Bing content shown above. Some outlets will supply it at a cheaper price.

Bix Beiderbecke - Hot Dance! **Metronome NET 2024** **UK**
Changes - Mary - There Ain't No Sweet Man - Mississippi Mud - From Monday On - My Pet (take 1) - Louisiana - Tain't So, Honey, Tain't So - That's My Weakness Now - Because My Baby Don't Mean "Maybe" Now - Oh! Miss Hannah
This year is also the centenary of the birth of Bix and Robert Parker has produced this 25-track CD of Bix's great performances which include several Bing vocals as listed. As many of you will know, Mr. Parker has done wonderful work in reprocessing early jazz records to highlight the individual instruments. The CD will sell for around £10.99.

Broadway Musicals: The King And I **Prism Direct PLSATCD730** **UK**
Getting To Know You

Broadway Musicals: Guys and Dolls **Prism Direct PLSATCD732** **UK**
If I Were a Bell (with Patty Andrews) *and* I've Never Been In Love Before
Ernest Sutkowski drew our attention to these budget issues containing songs by various artists as there are items included by Bing which are not common to CD. Available from Prism Direct, 1 Dundee Way, Mollison Avenue, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 7SX, UK. (Phone 0870 747 2510, www.prismdirect.co.uk, email: enquiries@prismdirect.co.uk). Price £3.99 each.

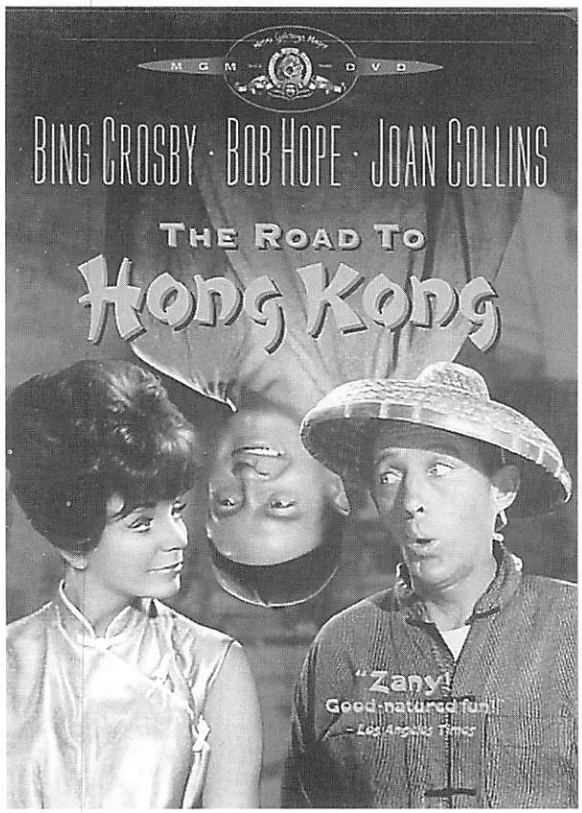
Bobby Gordon Plays Bing **Arbors Records ARCD 19172** **USA**
NON-BING
1. There Ain't No Sweet Man (Worth the Salt of My Tears) 2. Blue (and Broken Hearted) 3. Where the Blue of the Night 4. Love Thy Neighbor 5. I Can't Escape from You 6. I'm an Old Cowhand 7. Ballad Medley - Please - Now That You've Gone - With Every Breath I Take - I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance With You 8. Sweet and Lovely 9. Street of Dreams 10. From

Monday On 11. Love, You Funny Thing 12. Happy-Go-Lucky You (and Broken Hearted Me) 13. Road to Morocco 14. Just One More Chance 15. Personality 16. The Waiter and the Porter and the Upstairs Maid

Ernest Sutkowski also discovered this 1997 CD of versions of Bing's old favourites, many in a Dixieland style. No vocals but great listening. I loved it! A native New Yorker, Bobby Gordon worked with the likes of Eddie Condon, Wild Bill Davison, and Mugsy Spanier. He was the house clarinettist at Condon's in New York City from 1977 to 1980. The CD is still available from many outlets but try Arbors Records Inc, 1700 McMullen-Booth Rd., Suite C-3, Clearwater FL 34619, USA (Phone 813-726-7494, toll free (800) 299-1930, e-mail: mrd@gate.net) if you have problems. Price $15 or so. Nice notes by Floyd Levin who includes the following:

I welcome this opportunity to disclose a facet of Bing Crosby's generosity that is not generally known. It was in the mid-'70s, when the Louis Armstrong Statue Fund, which I headed, was stymied on dead-center. We lacked $10,000 for the completion of the twenty foot tall bronze monument already in work at the foundry. Bing learned of the dilemma and donated the entire proceeds of his San Francisco concert to supply the lacking funds. The brightest day of my life was when his phone call informed me that I could pick up a $10,000 check at his Beverly Hills office. The beautiful Armstrong monument now stands proudly in New Orleans' Louis Armstrong Park - thanks, in great measure, to Bing's dedicated love for "Satchmo."

DVD AND VIDEO CORNER



The Road to Hong Kong
MGM 1004044 **USA**

This DVD was duly issued in December as foreshadowed in our last issue. Region 1 (USA etc.), black & white, widescreen. The only extra is the original theatrical trailer. Sub titles can be added in French and Spanish. There are 20 scenes which can be accessed separately. The packaging is in colour creating the impression of a colour film which I always think is a bit misleading. Years ago, lobby cards for black & white films were often displayed in colour too and I can remember how disappointed I was on occasion finding films in black & white when I had expected otherwise. No details of scenes are given inside the packaging which seems rather penny-pinching. The picture quality of the DVD itself is excellent of course as is the sound.

The film itself is widely accepted as being the weakest of the "Road" movies and I suppose I watched it on this occasion with fresh eyes wondering why it has dated so badly when "Roads" like *Utopia* and *Morocco* seem so much fresher. The film was a joint production with Crosby and Hope having substantial financial stakes in the enterprise. As box office takings were pretty good, they must have done very well financially. Presumably the decision to make the movie in black and white in England was all to do with money. The low production values don't help however and the script is not strong. Joan Collins does not impress and also the songs are mediocre. Robert Morley is quite good as the leader of the Third Echelon and the various guest appearances add to the overall effect nicely. Bob Hope gives his usual quality "Road" film performance but, sad to relate, it is Bing who is not the man he was in the earlier epics. We know that Bing was suffering badly from the pain of his kidney stones at that time and instead of his usual carefree image he seems rather careworn in many of the scenes. His performance is workmanlike and competent but the easy-going magic is unfortunately missing on this occasion.

But, whilst the film may be flawed in some areas, my wife and I still enjoyed watching it until the early hours! It's readily available in the USA, price around $15. UK members can obtain the DVD from Amazon via the Internet but please contact me if you are having problems getting it.

Holiday Inn **Universal Pictures 902 804 2. 4** **UK**

We gave full details of this excellent new DVD package (Region 2 only - UK etc.) in our last issue and I was delighted to see some good reviews in various publications including the prestigious British *Sunday Times,* whose Patricia Nicol said:

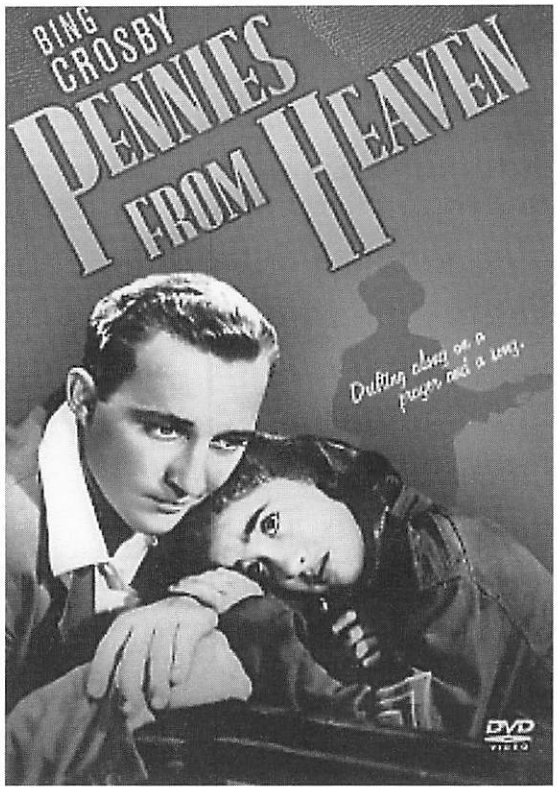
It gave its name to the hotel chain, spawned White Christmas, the second most successful single of all time, and paired two of the biggest box-office draws, Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. But perhaps most importantly, Irving Berlin's folksy all-American musical, set in a hotel that only opens on US holidays, brought succour in 1942, to an America that had just entered the war. Even if musicals are not to your tastes, it's fascinating in that historical context. Pearl Harbor was bombed midway through filming, so an already patriotic premise was boosted. Thus, Crosby — perhaps the Bruce Springsteen of his day - sings Independence Day's jingoistic "I'm an American troubadour, singing a song of freedom for all people who cry out to be free" before a montage of munitions workers. This superbly restored DVD includes an excellent audio commentary, as well as profiles. One for the library.

DVD Review magazine gave it an overall four star rating and included in its review were these comments on the extras.

The superb "Song And Dance Men" is a tailor-made guide through the stars' careers courtesy of Fred's daughter and the duo's

long-term collaborator, Ken Barnes. With exhaustive archive footage it is definitive and delightful. Fred's rendition of "Puttin' On The Ritz" worth the disc price alone. The commentary is another gem, with contributions from the two leads making it genuine and endearing. For such an old film, this really is exemplary stuff. Fred's feet and Bing's voice will warm even the coldest hearts this Christmas.

Pennies From Heaven **Columbia** **USA**



Issued in January in the USA (Region 1 only), this DVD was reviewed enthusiastically by Ronald Epstein of the Internet based *Home Theater Forum.* Here's an extract:

> *I am having the time of my life discovering these B&W classics that I would have never considered watching before if not for the fact I was reviewing them. Can't begin to tell you how much I enjoyed 'Pennies From Heaven', a rather simple and enjoyable story with terrific musical numbers from Crosby, Louis Armstrong and Lionel Hampton (watch for a memorable "Skeleton Dance" number).... Though not by any means perfect, 'Pennies From Heaven' looks darn good. I give the transfer much credit for looking very sharp. Images are finely detailed and contrast level is excellent. Blacks also appear as black rather than gray. The generally good image quality overshadows the fact that there are quite a few blemishes scattered throughout and picture jumps during the first 4 minutes of the film. Consider the fact this movie is nearly 70 years old and you can easily appreciate how good it looks here. The digitally mastered mono audio is very clean. There's only a slight amount of background hiss and fortunately, audio doesn't become shrill. Bing's voice shines through with amazing clarity. Most notably absent here is the film's original theatrical trailer. Instead, there are trailers included for 'It Happened One Night' and 'Lost Horizon'. Other than that, the cupboard is bare. 'Pennies From Heaven' is a real winner! For a lazy weekend afternoon you could do no better than sitting back and enjoying this fun, musical film that will take you back in time to the golden age of Hollywood. What could be better than that?!*

I liked this DVD too. Bing looks good and he sings wonderfully. The quality of the DVD is pretty good and although there are no relevant extras, there are subtitles available in English, French and Japanese. It seems that the drummer featured in Louis Armstrong's band in "Skeleton In The Closet" is a very young Lionel Hampton and although Gary Giddins had mentioned this in his book, I had forgotten it until I read the review. The worst aspect is the recommended price which at $24.95 is a bit steep for an 81 minute film. It can be obtained slightly cheaper at some outlets.

Birth of the Blues / Blue Skies **MCA/Universal** **USA**
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court / Emperor Waltz **MCA/Universal** **USA**
Rhythm on the River / Rhythm on the Range **MCA/Universal** **USA**

These most attractive double feature DVDs are due to be released on May 6 in Region 1 format and we will carry reviews in our next issue. List price $19 which seems most reasonable, especially when compared to the *Pennies From Heaven* DVD, and I believe that some outlets are offering them even cheaper.

Road To Rio **Orbit Media HSC 10065** **UK**

Issued in Region 2 format (UK etc.), I understand that this DVD has only the film itself on it and that there are no extras. Recommended price seems to be about £15.99

Singin' in the Rain (Special Edition) **Warner Home Video** **USA**

Dave Duncan drew our attention to this DVD set a few months back with this posting on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum Bulletin Board.

"I picked up a special edition DVD of "Singin' in the Rain" recently (2 disc set) and besides the great film, there were many extra features including scenes from the original MGM musicals that featured the songs that were used in "Singing in the Rain". As the songs "Beautiful Girl" & "Temptation" were used in the film, the appropriate scenes from "Going Hollywood" are shown. A good 5 minute scene of Bing singing "Beautiful Girl" followed by his telephone conversation with Fifi Dorsay is featured along with the bar room scene where he sings "Temptation". It's great to see these segments in glorious DVD picture and sound - I just hope MGM/AU release the whole of "Going Hollywood" on DVD in the near future.

Dave Duncan"

The set costs around $26. Region 1. Also available on video (NTSC).

High Society **Warner Home Video** **USA / UK**

It has been reported that this much awaited DVD will be released in the USA on April 22. It is also being issued in the UK on May 26, rrp £12.99. We are told that the DVD will feature an Anamorphic transfer and Dolby Mono soundtrack with the following extras; (a) Cole Porter In Hollywood: True Love (b) Millionaire Droopy (1956 MGM short) (c) Gala Premiere for *High Society* (d) Radio Ads (e) Theatrical Trailer. Further details in the next issue.

Sinatra: The Classic Duets **USA**

A DVD (or video) version of a one-hour special which aired nationally in the USA on PBS in December 2002 and March 2003. It features an incredible roster of many of the greatest and most influential jazz and pop singers of all time. Bing sings "Together" (with Frank and Dean Martin, from Frank's 1959 Timex show) and "September Song" (with Frank, from the 1957 Edsel Show). *Sinatra: The Classic Duets* is due to hit stores on June 10, 2003 for a suggested retail price of $24.99 (DVD) and $14.99 (VHS - NTSC). The DVD will feature newly re-mastered sound and an enhanced picture, special commentary and stories from Frank Sinatra, Jr, Nancy Sinatra and Tina Sinatra, a "Duets Only" play option which enables the music to play with no voiceover interruptions and a text only commentary track option.

The Man With The Golden Arm **USA**

Being released on DVD later this year will be a special edition of the classic film, which earned Sinatra an Oscar nomination for best actor and the extras will include some important Bing material in the shape of the 1957 Christmas special when Frank's guest was the one and only Mr. Crosby. Further details will be provided in due course.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Bing Crosby Becomes a Scholarly Subject

In the 'Letters' section, Bob Achorn mentioned a review of the Hofstra event in the New York Times of December 15. This was written by THOMAS VINCIGUERRA, deputy editor of the news magazine, *The Week*. To give you some idea of the depth of some of the academic papers delivered at Hofstra we are reproducing extracts from the article with grateful thanks to the New York Times.

Twenty-five years after his death, Bing Crosby lives on in a number of indelible guises for a certain generation of Americans. There was Bing, the master of mellow, who crooned and swung a golf club with equal ease. There was Bing the movie star, at home playing a priest or Bob Hope's sidekick in seven "Road" pictures. And, inescapably at this time of year, there was the Bing who warbled "White Christmas," still the best-selling Christmas single of all time and the focus of a new book, "White Christmas: The Story of an American Song," by Jody Rosen (Scribner).

Now there is Bing, the object of scholarly study. Last month, Hofstra University presented "Bing! Crosby and American Culture," a three-day symposium devoted to der Bingle's life and times. In addition to panel discussions, memorabilia displays and retrospectives of his music and movies, the conference offered a clutch of academic papers about the legacy of Harry Lillis Crosby, some of which are excerpted below.

Crosby's best known film character, Father Chuck O'Malley, was a religious archetype, says David E. White of St. John Fisher College in "Analogies of Ignorance in 'Going My Way'": Father O'Malley seems to be the embodiment of what William James called the religion of healthy-mindedness. This attitude is characterized by high spirits, optimism and a general denial or disregard for the tragic aspects of life. . .

What most viewers of "Going My Way" and "The Bells of St. Mary's" see as the happy-go-lucky, oh-so-charming Bing Crosby is actually a type of the Catholic saint, or of the religious person generally, who has been brought to a state of (somewhat subdued) ecstasy by first totally surrendering the personal will to the divine will, but secondly by cultivating an extremely vivid and personal sense of the divine presence.

In "Going His Way: How Bing Crosby Helped the Irish Become White," Charles A. Coletta Jr. of Bowling Green State University finds that O'Malley is a powerful icon of the immigrant experience, especially when compared with his boss, Father Fitzgibbon (Barry Fitzgerald): Crosby's and Fitzgerald's characters are contrasted as a fully assimilated younger American and an older Irishman who has yet to be fully incorporated into the modern United States. . . . Fitzgerald's characterization is laced with stereotypical Irish attributes: he drinks, is a curmudgeon, yet still lovable, adores his aged mother and rhapsodizes about his homeland.

Crosby's O'Malley, in contrast, is fully Americanized as he plays baseball and golf (of course), enjoys popular culture, and is occasionally seen out of his priestly garb. . . . The scene in which O'Malley and Fitzgibbon share a drink and croon "Too-raa-loora" symbolizes a "passing of the torch." It is here that the older Irishman realizes he must move aside and let a new generation of Irish-Americans lead. It also made the Catholic Church less mysterious and more accessible to those born outside the faith.

Crosby reached his zenith as a totem of Americana in his "Road" pictures with Bob Hope, argues Mary Anne Schofield of Villanova University in "The Bashful Quixote: Bing Crosby as Reluctant War Hero": Crosby was the magician of the war effort. Successfully teamed with Bob Hope, he sold belief in the country, in our cause, in America. They were patriotutes, a name coined by Otis Anderson, a physician on the National Advisory Policy Committee on Social Protection on 1943. . . . In essence, they were the magical morale builders who the troops at home and abroad needed to fashion and control their dreams. . . .

No matter what the setting, it was always the dream of the chase, the dream of free men, that was packaged and sold. In fact, [the author] Lary May will argue the three World War II "Road" movies foreshadow escapist leisure realms like Disneyland and Las Vegas hotels; Crosby and Hope try to find a fairyland restoration of

"pleasure and play before the Fall." Bing Crosby was a patriotute! He sold pleasure.

Walter Raubicheck of Pace University disagrees. In "American Archetypes: How Crosby and Hope Became Hollywood's Greatest Comedy Team," he holds that Crosby was a proto-rebel:

In both films Bing made with Fred Astaire, Bing endeavors to establish alternative paths to personal and professional success. In "Holiday Inn" he wants to stay in show business but only on terms that will allow him both personal freedom and artistic choice, in the country inn opened only on holidays and located physically and psychologically far from the routinized performance and publicity characteristic of Broadway and Hollywood. In "Blue Skies" he needs to close each of his clubs as soon as they have been established so he can take on the challenge of creating a new one.

In each case Bing's character is always disillusioned by what has been considered "successful" in the past because of what he considers arbitrary cultural and/or personal restrictions. In effect Bing wants to combat the conformity of mainstream culture.

Elaine Anderson Phillips, a professor at Tennessee State University, suggests in "Saint Bing: Apatheia, Masculine Desire and the Films of Bing Crosby" that Bing's wide appeal lay elsewhere: Bing Crosby on screen is not only a sign of identification for male viewers, but also an unusual object of desire for female viewers. Crosby is a desiring but nonaggressive male whom women viewers could desire without threat of male violence. Crosby lacked the aggressive sexuality of Clark Gable, the energetic ambition of James Cagney and the physical grace of Fred Astaire. He does not win

Going his way: How Bing Crosby helped the Irish become white

women through physical appeal or force. He relies on his voice, which his biographer Gary Giddins credits with eroticizing American songs, and passive aggressive manipulation.

Despite his assured heterosexuality, Bing Crosby does share some traits with his female viewers: he must use intelligence, indirection and guile, if necessary, to get what he wants. Thus, the same women spectators who desired Crosby could unconsciously identify with his means of seduction.

For Michael Thomas Carroll of New Mexico Highlands University, Crosby was a commodity, packaged via the mass medium of radio. In "B(e)ing Modern: Crosby and the Matrix of Popular Modernity," Professor Carroll notes strange parallels between Crosby's 1942 performance of "How About You" on the Kraft Music Hall radio show and the ad copy for Kraft's signature cheese food, Velveeta:

The song presents a litany of things that the "average American" would assumedly like: Franklin Roosevelt, holding hands at the movies, motor trips, potato chips and so on. While the song is addressed from male to female, it lacks the erotic energy of the crooner songs of the early 1930's. The discourse is one that establishes that the male and the female are within a common social sphere, have preferences purported to represent the middle range of experience. This more public kind of tone was certainly more in tune with the national goals during the darkest year of World War II.

This song and others like it with Crosby's re-engineered vocal style (the "Crosby cry," the scatting, the jazz inflections never totally gone, but seriously muted) could be described, referring to our Velveeta list, as "Everyone likes it . . . smooth, creamy . . . mellow . . . good for children and elders alike . . . for all your family . . . so easy to digest . . . cool `n' easy yet substantial . . . completely adaptable . . . it slices, melts, pours." But there was complexity in that middlebrow blandness. In "Bing on a Binge: Casting Against Type in 'The Country Girl (1954),'" Linda A. Robinson, a Ph.D. candidate at Northwestern University, describes "four layers of identity - or, perhaps, more accurately, of performance" that he exhibits during an audition scene:

The base identity or performance is Crosby, the biological entity. The second layer of performance is, as in the case of all of Crosby's films, the Crosby star persona. The third layer of performance is the character of Elgin, who, 10 years earlier in the film's diegesis, WAS the Crosby persona. Elgin is, in effect, a degraded and defeated version of the Crosby persona, the Crosby persona robbed of its resilience, confidence and good humor.

The fourth layer of performance is the auditioning Elgin; that is, the degraded Crosby persona recreating the illusion of the intact, functioning Crosby persona. In short, in this scene we see Crosby the man performing the Crosby persona performing the degraded Crosby persona performing the Crosby persona.

Thomas Vinciguerra

Bing Crosby

March 10, 1975

Dear Larry:

I'm afraid I'm not going to be very useful to you in your search for data in connection with some of the old radio programs.

I can't remember who the announcer was. I don't think it was Brokenshire. I knew him, but I don't think I did many shows with him.

I wouldn't be able to recall definitely any members of the band, but we generally worked with Lang and Venuti, Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, Arnold Brilhart - people like that, but I suppose it varied from week to week.

I'm sure when Raymond Page took over the orchestra it was occasioned by the switch to Hollywood, and I don't remember any of the personnel or who the announcer was.

I don't know who the series was for, the sponsor or anything else about it.

I believe we did change, for a short time, from "The Blue of the Night" as a theme song to "Just An Echo In the Valley".

I don't know how long we used it, but for an appreciable period of time, and the format of the show, I'm sure, was just like the Cremo show. It reads like it, from the data you furnished me, and it's quite likely that we did indeed do a show for the East Coast and one for the West. That was standard procedure in those days.

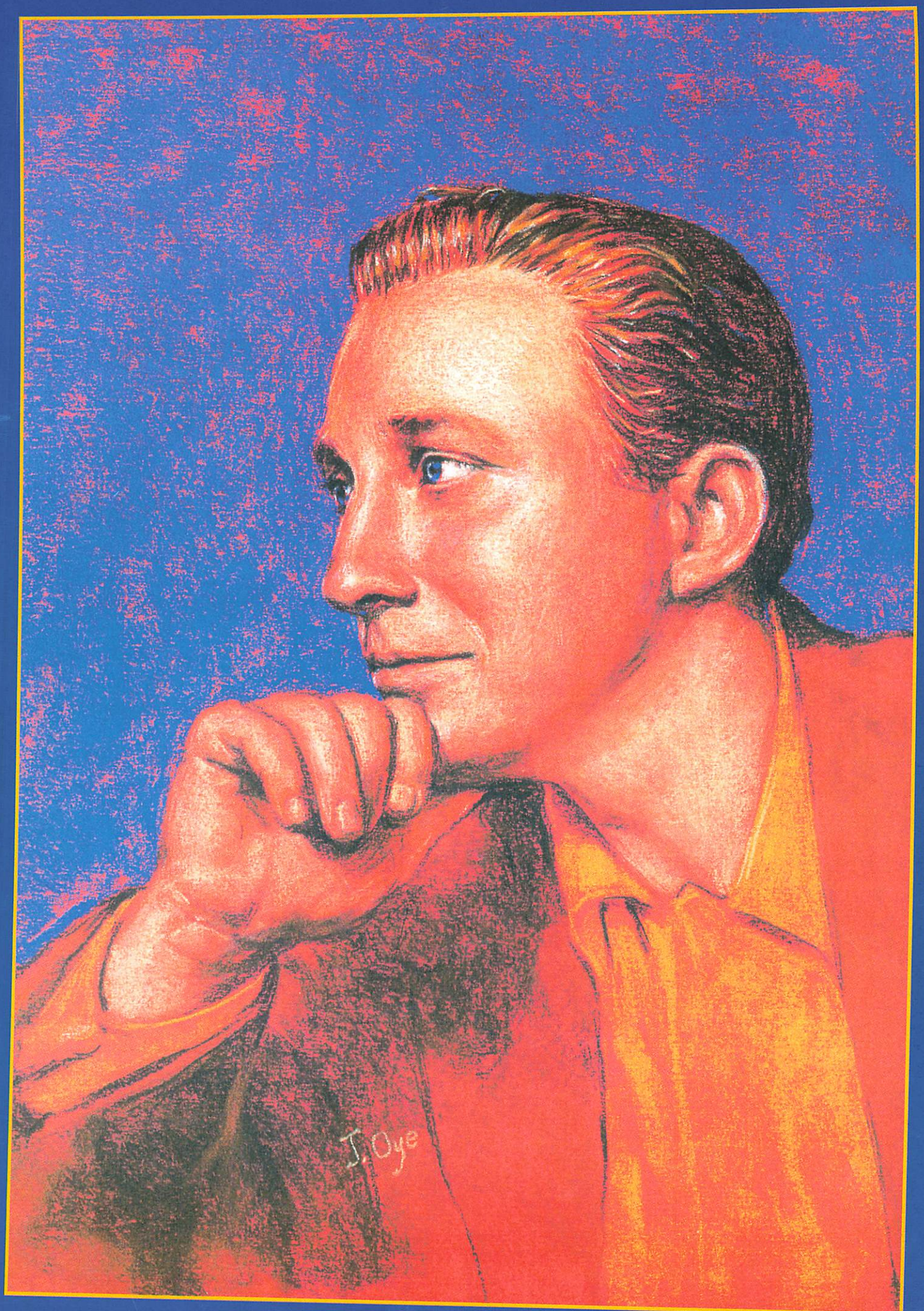
I hope some of this is useful to you, and I wish I could supply a little more details -

Sincerely yours,

Bing

Bing Crosby

BC:lm



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